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NOTHING VENTURE,

NOTHING HAVE.

A Novel.

BY ANNE BEALE,

AUTHOR OF "GLADYS THE REAPER," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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NOTHING VENTURE, NOTHING HAVE.

CHAPTER I.

TWENTY YEARS AGO.

The stage coach, with its four prancing horses, drove up to the door of the Royal Oak, according to its custom, and stopped at that good country inn. The guard sounded his exhilarating horn from behind, and ou ran the ostler and brisk little waitress, whilst the landlady stood in portly grandeur, in the doorway of her hostel. The coachman threw the reins over the horses, and jumped down from his box, but did not, as usual, go straight to the bar for his glass of cordial whilst the fresh horses were being harnessed, but went direct to the coach door to assist some passengers. It was not very often

that inside passengers got out at the Royal Oak, so every one was on the alert to see who they were.

Curiosity was soon gratified. The coachman nearly lifted out a lady and a little girl, whom he carefully led to the door of the inn, and then loudly called for the steps, in order to enable some outside passengers to dismount from the more conspicuous top of the coach.

These were a woman and a boy, the former of whom immediately busied herself about luggage, whilst the latter asked the coachman some question concerning the locality.

"That large box covered with a wrapper is ours, coachman," said the woman; "and that portmanteau, and the deal box on the top, and two carpet-bags, and two bandboxes in the 'ind boot. There, guard, that is ours too. Gracious, don't handle it so roughly; and now you are come to the packing-chest at the bottom. There, take care it don't fall. Yes, I think that *is* all, thank you."

"Well, ma'am, and nearly enough too," said the coachman, as he received his fee from the Abigail. "I think the lady there wouldn't have the conscience only to give me three shillings for all this."

"She don't know anything about it; but

there's another shilling, as you 'ave been civil and obleeging. And now there's the boy that sat next me, wanting 'is luggage."

"Guard, please ma'am," said that individual, now coming forward.

"Bless me, there ain't nothing but coachmen and guards. I don't see what you 'ave done, sir, except blow such a screeching tune that it nearly turned my lady there wild. For my part, I can take care of myself, and my ladies too."

"So I should think, ma'am, but the guard expects something all the same."

"Well, there's half a crown then. And now see to that poor boy, who stands like patience on a monument."

"That's your box, my lad, ain't it?" said the guard to the boy.

"Yes, and that other tin box in front."

"My! if this ain't a heavy article. Where did this turn up, my lad?"

"I brought it from Australia. Take care of it. It is full of curiosities."

In due course of time the luggage was collected, the coachman and guard had taken their tonic, the four fresh horses had replaced the four weary ones, the reins were in the coachman's hands, and he on his box, the guard was blowing vigorously on his horn, and the remaining pas-

sengers were once more whirled off on their way to their more distant destination.

At the inn door still stood the four dismounted passengers.

"You had better walk into the parlour a bit, ma'am," said the landlady, addressing her whom she thought the most distinguished of the party.

"Take my hand, mamma," said the little girl.

"The lady is nearly blind," whispered the maid to the landlady.

"Poor soul! Lawkaday! This way, my dear,"and the landlady preceded her guests to the parlour.

"Sit there a minute, mamma, and I will come back," said the child, leading her mother to a seat by the open window, and again running to the door to watch what was going on.

"Are we to drive in that open car, Fluke? How nice!" said the child.

"Not so nice, Miss. I don't know 'ow your mamma is to get into it."

"We will manage that, ma'am," said an elderly man, who was standing near the car aforesaid. "Jack, put the luggage into the cart. What be'st about, gaping like a wide-mouthed frog?"

"I be'ant about nothing, measter," said Jack

a short, shock-headed boy, who was gazing at Mrs. Fluke.

"Then set to work, glow-bason," said the master, beginning himself to lift a box into a neighbouring cart, that was prepared to receive it and its companions.

The boxes were soon in the cart, and the master was saying, "Now, don't go to sleep on the road, Jack," when the boy who had got down from the coach, and had been hitherto sitting on his boxes, and looking about him, interrupted him by asking the following questions.

"Will you tell me the way to Yeo, if you please? And can I get my luggage carried for me? And is Mr. Job Lyons at home, do you know?"

The boy was a physiognomist, as boys and dogs generally are. Of all the people busied about the travellers and their proceedings outside that small inn, Farmer Bull was the one most likely to give a kindly answer to the above questions.

"Yeo is to the right, my lad, but it is five miles from here. Nothing but a horse and cart could carry your heavy boxes, and you can get them for money, but not without. And Mr. Job Lyons was at home this morning. What do'st know about him?"

"He is my uncle, and I am going to his house."

"Your uncle! Who on earth are you, then?"

"The son of Richard Lyons, who went to Australia, and——"

The boy's hitherto resolute voice faltered, and he paused.

"Dick Lyons's boy! My poor lad. And your father and mother?"

"Both dead," jerked out the boy, with a strong effort to keep down some inward emotion.

"Poor lad! And be'st going to look for a home at Yeo? Bad look out, I'm afraid. How did you come here?"

"In a ship from Australia, of course. And then by coach."

"All alone?"

"Yes."

"No friends?"

"I always find friends," was the hopeful answer, in a firm loud voice.

"Put the lad's luggage into the cart, glowbason," cried the farmer to Jack, whose open mouth was now directed towards Mr. Job Lyons's nephew.

"My, measter, here's a heft!"

"'Tis a heft, sure enough. Why, lad, what hast got here?"

"Geological specimens, curiosities; let me help. Take care, glow-bason, if that's your name," said the lad.

"My name's John Dull, and my mother paid for my christening, which is more than yourn did, mayhap," said Jack, offended.

"I dare say it is, though I was born where there was plenty of water, and named after it."

"My lady is ready now, Mr. Bull," said Mrs. Fluke, who, after listening to the preceding conversation, suddenly remembered her mistress seated in the inn parlour.

"In a minute, ma'am. Thee'st better get into the cart, lad, and see after thy specimens. Be'st tired?" said Mr. Bull.

"Well, rather; I have had a long journey," replied young Lyons.

"Boy," here broke in a sweet voice, "you shall go in the car with us; the cart is so rough."

"Indeed, Miss Aline, he shall not," peremptorily responded Mrs. Fluke; "your mamma will not approve."

"But I say he shall, Fluke; and I'll ask mamma."

Of course this was said by the young lady traveller, whose large black eyes had been wandering here, there, and everywhere, whilst the

luggage had been stowed away, and whose ears had been equally open. She ran off to her mamma, followed by Fluke.

"Mamma, here is an Australian boy, who is going to Yeo. He has no father or mother. He is a nice boy. May he go in the car?"

"Is he clean, my dear? You know I have a horror of strange boys."

"His face is very clean. Of course his coat is dusty, because he came outside; but so is Fluke's cloak."

"He is anything but clean, my lady," said Fluke.

"Now, Fluke! how can you be so cross, and he an orphan? May he go, mamma? I am sure he looks a nice boy."

"Provided he does not come near me, Aline. Don't dispute, Fluke, if you please. It is so vulgar. When are we to get off?"

"Now, mamma. The car is waiting."

Aline led her mother carefully to the car.

"Boy! you may go in the car," she said.

"Not if that lady does not like it," said young Lyons.

"But mamma likes it, and I like it, and Fluke doesn't mind, really; do you, Fluke?"

"It's nothing to me, I'm sure, Miss," said Fluke, majestically.

"Will you be pleased to get in, madam," said Mr. Bull, addressing the blind lady, in a voice so gentle that she turned towards him and smiled.

"You are Mr. Bull, at whose farm we are to lodge, I suppose," she said.

"Yes, madam; and I hope you and the young lady will be comfortable. Sweet heart, she looks kindly happy."

It was remarkable that the farmer could and did speak two distinct dialects, the one somewhat formal, but grammatical English, the other broad Dorsetshire, though not that of the actual peasant.

"Allow me to help you, madam," he said, almost lifting the lady into the car.

"Thank you," she said, when seated. "The country air is very pleasant after London."

"Mr. Bull," broke in Aline, pulling his coat-tails, "will you make the boy get into the car instead of the cart. He shall, I say."

"Father's own son—'cat after kind,' I see," said the farmer. "Thee'st needn't be proud, lad," whispering to the boy, "'tis thy uncle's car, and I'm his father-in-law. Get up in front."

The boy obeyed; but said, glancing at Mrs. Fluke, "I have walked twenty miles a day, and could have walked five very well to-day."

"Thee'rt a brave lad I see, and 'ult want all thy independence for the cousins at Yeo."

Mr. Bull having seen Jack start with the luggage and cart, and finally closed the car-door upon the ladies—it was a small, open, round-backed car—mounted, himself, in front, and drove off. Let us inspect the party a little more particularly.

Mr. Bull was a tall, thin, respectable-looking farmer, of about sixty years of age. He had on a black coat, brown kerseymere breeches and gaiters, and a broad-brimmed hat. He was evidently dressed in his best. There was nothing rough about him, but his hands, which must have done him good service. The general expression of his face was gentle, but there was a keen glance of intelligence in his eyes, and a touch of humour about his mouth that gave a peculiar animation to his countenance when he spoke or smiled. Thick, curly, grizzled hair was brushed off a broad, well-lined forehead, which, together with a certain independence of manner, showed sense and resolution.

Madame Rambouillet—such was the name of the lady—was also tall and thin, of good carriage, and elegant figure. A very thick blue gauze veil was closely drawn over her face, through which nothing could be seen but a shade

over her eyes. She was attired in the fashion of twenty years ago. There was one peculiarity in her appearance. Her dress was entirely of a dark blue: gown, cloak, bonnet—all was of that unexceptionable colour. She sat very still, talked little, but seemed to be listening attentively to the graphic descriptions which her little girl gave her of the scenes they passed through.

This little girl, Aline by name, had nothing particularly to distinguish her from other little girls but a remarkable pair of eyes. These, even a stranger must, perforce, notice. They were large, brown, beaming, honest, trustful eyes, such as one has sometimes seen in a dog: eyes, the owner of which could never tell, or understand a lie; could never forsake a friend, or believe in a foe. She wore a straight, poked bonnet, and her brown, sunny hair, was cropped short, in somewhat boyish fashion. She had short straight petticoats and long trousers; and the colour blue predominated in her dress.

Mrs. Fluke was not one of the usual type of Abigails, either of that or this period. She was a plump, comely woman on the right side of forty; very plainly, but neatly dressed, in light cotton gown and straw bonnet. No flounces or gay ribbons improved her outer man, still there was a good air about her. Shrewd, quick

grey eyes, a good complexion, and high colour, were her personal attractions. She joined in the conversation that went on in the car familiarly enough, but never addressed Madame Rambouillet without marking the distinction between her as mistress and herself as maid.

We come lastly to the boy, Lachlan Lyons by name, who was seated in front by the side of Mr. Bull. He had, perhaps, more to distinguish him personally than the rest of the party, inasmuch as he had a remarkable breadth of forehead, and projection of eyebrows. Beneath these bushy brows his eyes sometimes looked out, as if they were searching for something beyond the scope of vision before him; but at others they were very much at home in the actual scene around him, and very inquisitive orbs they apparently were. He was a manly, good-looking boy; and, doubtless, in less way-worn clothes, and with a smoother head of hair, might have been more attractive to Mrs. Fluke, as he was very far from ungainly in air or figure.

Whilst I have been describing the inmates of the car, that vehicle has trundled on through lanes, by-ways, and cross-roads, some four or five miles.

"They are such pretty lanes, mamma," was Aline's constant cry. "There are primroses and

violets all over the banks; don't you smell them? and some of the fields are as yellow as butter with cowslips and buttercups. And now we are going through an arch of bushes, like a bower: and now over a grass lane, quite like velvet. Oh! Mr. Bull, are Yeo and the Downs Farm like this?"

"We are just come to the turning to the village, missey, where I must put down my young friend here. Walk straight up for half a mile, and then ask for your uncle's house, and any one will direct you."

Mr. Bull said this to young Lyons, whose countenance fell.

"Mamma, may we not drive the boy to his uncle's? Mr. Bull, you must take the boy to his new home," whispered Aline behind Mr. Bull, standing up to do so.

"Is it much longer?" asked Madame Rambouillet, wearily.

"About half a mile, madam, if we take the short cut after we reach my son-in-law's house."

"You had better put him down here," said Mrs. Fluke.

He was about to jump from the car, when Aline laid hold of his arm, and insisted on Mr. Bull's driving on.

"Mamma does not mind, do you mamma? And then we shall go through Yeo."

"Yes; take the boy to his uncle's," said Madame Rambouillet; and so they drove through Yeo, which, being an important place, must be honoured by a new chapter.

CHAPTER II.

THE DOWNS FARM.

Our travellers entered the village of Yeo at the bottom of it, and as it was long and straggling, it took them some little time to get to the top. Just on its outskirts there was a house of some pretensions, of which only the upper windows were visible, the rest of it being hidden by a very high, well-shorn box hedge, which surmounted a wall of some five or six feet. The said hedge was so high and round, that it excited the admiration of Aline.

"Who lives in that nice house on the right, Mr. Bull?" she asked. "It has a carriage entrance, mamma, and a very smooth gravel drive, and that is all I can see on account of the most splendid hedge in the world."

"Captain and Mrs. Love, and two children," replied Mr. Bull.

"Oh! what a sweet place," said Aline; "but how sad it looks with all the blinds down."

Mr. Bull took off his hat and bowed his head reverently as he passed the gate of the pretty vicarage on the left.

"Death has been there, young lady," he said, "and carried off the best and gentlest creature that ever lived. He always does take the good and leave the bad. And now he has cut down the tender young mother, and left the seedling baby in her place. God help our poor parson. Four children, and the youngest just come into this weary world!"

"Oh, Mr. Bull, how very sad," said Aline, with two large tears in her large eyes. "And the flowers in the garden look so bright under the warm sun. Why does the sun shine so? And who will take care of the little baby?"

"Our parson's sister is come, they say."

Whilst they were talking, they passed by two or three neat cottages unnoticed, and began to ascend the hill.

"There is an inn, mamma, with a large sign of a ram. It is covered with a vine, and has such curious old windows. And next is a shop. I think they must sell everything, there is so much in the windows. And who lives in that neat little house, with the palings and the garden in front?"

"Our new doctor lodges there. We never

had a doctor here before, and the first thing that happens is a death that's a loss to the whole parish. There he is, as fine as fippence."

A smart young man, with very bushy red whiskers, walked out of the neat house, and touched his hat to Mr. Bull, whilst he looked into the car. A well-dressed young lady came out of a neighbouring house, and stopped to speak to him.

"That is your second cousin, my lad, Miss Love, just left school," said Mr. Bull.

"I do not like that house," said Aline, "it looks as if the sun never could shine through those tall trees. A large house, mamma, very dreary-looking, with a plot of green in front, and no flowers, only a bed of shrubs in the middle, and some huge trees, full of rooks, behind. Who lives there, Mr. Bull?"

"Three maiden ladies, my dear, named Daw. Your great aunts, on your mother's side, my boy, and rich as Crœsus."

"How cold and damp they must be with that little pond opposite. Oh! there is the church, mamma; quite at the top of the hill, with a wood at the back, and looking down on the whole village. A grey, old church, with an ivied tower and large porch. The sun is shining on it just as it did on the poor little vicarage. It seems un-

kind, when the clergyman is so unhappy, doesn't it, Fluke?"

"What does the sun know about it?" said the matter-of-fact Fluke.

"There is the Manor Farm," said Mr. Bull, "with its back to us, its side to the road, and facing the church; and here are a dozen of thy cousins, and my grandchildren, lad, come out to see who's passing."

Young Lyons looked wistfully at a large, handsome, but decayed house at the right, with farm buildings at the back and sides, that seemed to be part of the house; and then at a troop of children, who rushed from a gate at the side, and shouted, "Grandfather, grandfather! have you got Mrs. Rambully?"

"Hush! you riotous brats!" said the farmer, stopping at the said gate, and getting down from the car; whilst young Lyons turned his head back, and for the first time looked into it.

"Thank you, ladies, I am very much obliged to you," he said, as well as some impediment in his throat would let him.

"You are very welcome," said Madame Rambouillet; "I hope you will find your relations at home."

"I hope they will be kind to you, poor boy," said Aline. "Good-bye."

He jumped off the car, and Aline added to her mother—

"He is a much nicer boy than his cousins, I'm sure, mamma."

Mr. Bull, meanwhile, was trying to quiet his grandchildren, who were all surrounding him, and asking—

"Is that Madam Rambully with the veil? Who is the other lady? Why did you come this way? Who is that boy?" and similar questions.

"Now, Jack, be of use for once in'st life, and hold the horse's head. Kern, where's thy father? Run quick, and say I want him."

A sturdy little lad of ten stood by the horse, whilst a tall girl ran off to do her grandfather's bidding, and soon returned, followed by her father. He was rather a slovenly-looking man, in work-a-day clothes, but with an air superior to his dress.

Mr. Bull took the young stranger by the hand, and led him inside the gate to meet his uncle.

"Job," he said, "thee'st not got brats enough, so heaven has sent thee another. Here's thy brother Dick's orphan; a likely lad. Be kind to him, and treat him as a godsend. Tell Rhoda to be good to the boy, and let him come to me when beest tired of him. Don't look so dazed, man!"

Mr. Job Lyons did not seem to consider the

boy in the light of a godsend, or, indeed, to understand what it all meant. He glanced at him instinctively, and then at his own little tribe of children, and finally pushed his fingers through his hair, then said slowly—

"You know, father-in-law, that Rhoda will never put up with it. I don't believe the boy is Dick's."

"Yes, I am, sir," said the boy, "and here is a letter from my poor father to you; but I can go away, if you will not have me."

"This is Dick's handwriting, sure enough," said Mr. Lyons.

"I must go now," said Farmer Bull, "I can't keep the ladies waiting. Good-bye, my lad! Come over to the Downs when you like. Take care of your new cousin, and be kind to him, Kern; and tell Jemima and Kezia to take care of him. Now, Luke, go and open the gate into the downs for us."

Farmer Bull was soon driving up the steep hill towards the church, beyond which there was a gate that opened into the downs, towards which Jack ran as fast as he could.

Whilst they were going slowly upwards, Aline was gazing intently downwards upon the farm and group she had left behind, and describing them, as was her custom, to her mother.

The Manor Farm had been once the Manor House, and still retained some of its ancient grandeur. It had a handsome stone porch and mullioned windows, which, though partly concealed by a large vine on one side, and a Virginian creeper and passion flower on the other, looked out aristocratically from beneath its broad eaves. There was a gravelled path in front, leading into the fields at its side; and beyond it a green, with a sundial in the middle, enclosed by a high box hedge. In the centre of the green was another path, leading straight from the door, through a little gate placed under an arch cut in the box hedge, into a large garden beyond, whence a second gate opened into the churchyard. At the back of the church, which directly faced the farm, though seated much above it, were the broad, breezy downs. Glimpses of these were visible through the trees that flanked and made a background to the church.

The road up the hill lay on the left of the farm, but on its right an interminable succession of fields, all ending in the range of downs that ran straight on for many miles.

Aline was too much engrossed with the human beings who stood on the gravel path outside the house to say much of the beauty of the scene around; but very beautiful it looked beneath the

sunlight on that spring afternoon. Her talk was as follows:—

"The man has opened the letter, mamma, and is reading it. The boy is looking up the hill after us. I wish Mr. Bull had brought him with us."

"Well, to be sure, Miss Aline," interrupted Fluke, "you take up with every one."

"All those rude children are staring at him as if they had never seen any one before. Now the girl is trying to peep into the letter over her father's shoulder, and one little boy has climbed up the window behind. They do not seem to speak to the poor stranger. How very unkind! Ah! now I cannot see them any longer. We have passed the pretty church, and are come upon the downs. Mr. Bull, I hope they will not turn that boy out of doors."

"Oh, no! little miss. He is sure of bed and board, even if he gets more kicks than halfpence with it."

"Are they kind people, Mr. Bull?"

"Very well in their way; but they are not rich, and have ten children."

"Ah! now I can see the farm again, far, far down below us. They are gone into the house, boy and all, mamma. Such a glorious view—meadows running after one another, into one

another, and dotted all over with trees, and farms, and cottages, and Yeo in the midst. There is a house with towers: what is that, Mr. Bull?"

"The Downs Hall. It is being rebuilt for the young heir whilst he is abroad."

"And what is his name?"

"Nux—Sir John Nux."

"My dear Aline, do not ask so many questions," whispered Madame Rambouillet.

"Very well, mamma. This is like driving in the sky; on the wind, and in the wind. There is a large house far on, with trees round it, halfway up the hill: what is that, Mr. Bull?"

"The Downs Lodge, where three bachelor gentlemen live."

"How funny! what is their name?"

"Bat, my dear."

"I don't like it at all," said Aline. "Oh! now we are going down the hill, on a green, rutty road. Is that your house, Mr. Bull?"

"That is the Downs Farm, my dear, where I hope you will be very happy."

"I am sure I shall. It looks like a bird's nest, and the thatched roof like the tree in which it is built. It is at the very foot of the hill, mamma, so the winds will not hurt your eyes. There is a bow window looking into a garden. It is not quite so large and handsome a farm as the Manor,

is it, Mr. Bull? but it looks much snugger and more retired."

As the horse quickened his pace, Aline clapped her hands, exclaiming at intervals, "I see a bower, and an orchard, and ricks,—they are milking the cows on the other side; how very delightful!"

"We will alight at this little back gate, if you please, madam," said Mr. Bull. "I am sorry to say we can only get to our front door through the barton, but the little glass door at the back will take you out into the garden, and up the downs. Our roads are very bad; indeed we have only field-lanes from the village any way. Here's my missus."

A tall, thin woman walked up the path to the wicket-gate.

"I hope you are not very tired, ladies," she said; "I am afraid you will find it very dull, but I will do my best to make you comfortable. How have you got on, grandfather?"

"Capital, my dear; I hope everything's ready."

"I think so. This way, my dear," said Mrs. Bull to Aline, who was carefully leading her mother along the narrow path. "Dear heart!" to Fluke, "does she always do it?"

"She won't let any one else."

Mrs. Bull and Fluke fell behind.

"You didn't exaggerate the lonesomeness of the place, ma'am, I see," said the latter.

"No, ma'am, we see nobody but the farm people and the animals; and nothing but the hills and fields. I hope you don't mind the country—there's always plenty going on."

"I caan't say I like it much; I hope 'tisn't 'aunted, that's all."

Mrs. Bull would have been a study for a painter. Every one said she was the most beautiful woman ever seen, and that she and her husband were a pattern pair both in looks and conduct. She had a calm, pale face, a serene mouth, very dark blue eyes emitting a tranquil light like an autumn sunset, two bands of silver hair, and a tall erect figure. She wore a plain white muslin cap, with a border neatly plaited, so as to set close round the face, a full white muslin kerchief under the black silk gown, and a white muslin apron. It was all so purely white, that, as Aline whispered to her mother, "she was like a tall white rose in the midst of very dark leaves."

She led her lodgers up the path, to a glass door that opened into a pretty parlour in which was the bow-window aforesaid. White muslin curtains, a white muslin blind, a white muslin covering over the chintz sofa, and a white table-

cloth made the parlour a fitting place for its mistress.

"I thought you would like a fire after your journey, madam," she said. "The evenings are chill-like."

"Thank you, Mrs. Bull," said Madame Rambouillet, in a voice that bespoke tears.

"Mamma," said Aline, hurriedly, "you must not."

"Don't, my lady," exclaimed Fluke. "Tea is ready; will you make it, Mrs. Bull, if you please?"

"And such butter and brown bread, and rich cream and jam, and eggs waiting to be boiled! Oh! Mamma, we shall be so happy!" said Aline.

"Will you walk upstairs first, ladies?" said Mrs. Bull.

They went upstairs into a room, where white dimity curtains, white toilet cloths, and white counterpane again befited Aline's white rose.

"May I kiss you, Mrs. Bull?" said the child, when her mamma was seated in a white easy chair, her dark blue dress making a pretty contrast. "You are so kind, and it is so nice."

Mrs. Bull stooped down, and Aline's arms were round her neck in a moment. From that first kiss the farmer's wife and the little maiden were firm and loving friends.

Mrs. Bull went down into the hall, where Jemima Lyons, her eldest grand-daughter, was frying rashers of bacon and boiling eggs for tea.

This hall was an old-fashioned room, with a large wood fire on the hearth; a huge chimney-corner big enough to hold the ten grand-children; an oaken settle half circling the fire; tables, arm-chairs, three-legged stools, bureau, a dresser, also of oak. It was very clean and cheerful. On the bureau stood a large pile of books, and on the window-seat several pots of geraniums and other flowers. A handsome eight-day clock ticked monotonously, and Time, with large wings and a larger scythe, moved to and fro with every vibration of the pendulum. The window looked out into the barton, which was railed off from the house, and beyond which was a large orchard on one side, and up-sloping fields on the other. An old sheep-dog lay on the hearth before the fire, a huge black tom cat slept on the settle; and a very talkative jackdaw hung in a cage near the window.

Jemima seemed particularly wrathful with the dog, and was constantly waking him up by kicks, and "you're always in everybody's way, Wolf. You might know what a fuss we're in."

Jemima was a dark, good-looking, rosy girl of sixteen or thereabouts—very fussy apparently,

and very smart, inasmuch as she made more noise than was necessary, and wore a coral necklace and coral earrings.

"I say, Joan!" she suddenly exclaimed, "come quick and take off the kettle! It's boiling over! and I can't dirty myself."

Then came in a girl even redder than herself, who looked furtively round, and then ran quickly across the room to the fire, and took off the offending kettle.

"Lor, Miss Mima! 'Spose I should zee 'em in this muck. What be 'em like? John Dull beant come back, and there be them mortal pigs to zarve. Here be missus!"

"Gossiping, girls? Come, make haste, Joan, there's plenty to do," said Mrs. Bull.

"Iz, I knows, missus. And that John Dull beant come whoam yet."

There was a sound of steps on the stairs, and Joan took flight into the kitchen, through a door that led into it from the hall; but she stopped when she got there, and peeped back at the lodgers as they went into the parlour.

Madame Rambouillet and Aline were soon seated at their ample tea, and Fluke was waiting on them. It was she who carried all the plates, &c., in and out, to the great disappointment of Jemima, who had fully meant to do it.

"I wouldn't have come if I had known," she grumbled to Joan. "'Tis no great amusement to fry bacon. I do enough o' that at home."

"Lor! Miss Mima! There be goggles, and a thing a moast as big as a bonnet front outsiden 'em. I 'spose her beant a servant as comed out for the beacon."

Certainly Madame Rambouillet had a singular effect. She sat at tea with her little daughter, with very large blue spectacles under a very wide blue shade, which effectually concealed the upper half of her face, so that nothing was visible but the point of a straight nose and a mouth, the expression of which was that of discontent. She did not appear to be totally blind, as she managed to feed herself with very slight help from Mrs. Fluke. Her light hair was plaited in a very broad plait at the back of her head, and she had long, fair ringlets hanging down her pale cheeks. Her hands were thin and white, and her long neck was also very white, so that the dark blue attire was very becoming. Distinguished-looking, would be the term that many would use to describe her. She yielded to be waited upon both by Fluke and her child quite as if it was natural to her, and without apology or many thanks.

Her bonnet and blue veil were placed at her side just as if she were already meditating a

walk. This was, however, not the case; for as soon as she had finished an excellent meal—the best, she said, that she had eaten for months—she went to bed. John Dull had duly brought the cart, and Fluke had unpacked and arranged the night-gear.

Aline was so tired that she was fast asleep almost before she was safely tucked by Fluke into the little white bed near her mother's larger one; and Fluke was only too thankful to wish them both good-night, and to go and have her own tea, which good Mrs. Bull had kept warm and comfortable for her.

CHAPTER III.

THE OLD BARONETCY.

"PERHAPS, ma'am," said Mrs. Bull, as Fluke entered the hall, "you'd like to have your tea here with my master in the chimney-corner? It seems more cheerful-like than the parlour."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Fluke. "Indeed I should."

Fluke sat down upon the settle, and made herself at home without further trouble. Mr. Bull was already seated before a snug, round table covered with a snow-white cloth, and such a good tea as people only get under extraordinary circumstances. Mrs. Bull and Jemima joined the pair, and they soon became a sociable party.

"One can always drink tea," said Mrs. Bull, apologetically. "This is my third. We had ours, Jemima and I. This is my eldest granddaughter, ma'am."

"I should 'ave thought it was your daughter," said Fluke, astonished.

Jemima blushed and laughed, and said, "Well, I think mother looks nearly as old as granny."

"There's a new cousin at home, Mima," said Mr. Bull, and related what we already know of young Lyons.

"I must go home, grandfather," said Mima. "Mother will be half wild with fright at a new boy. It will be as bad as when the twins came, and she cried till she made herself ill. And now those miserable children are everything, and we elders nothing."

"You shouldn't speak so, Jemima," said Mrs. Bull. "Your mother is a good deal tried with such a family."

"And so is everybody else, I'm sure. But please to tell me about this cousin, grandfather, and then I'll go, for I know Kezia and Kern won't know what to do with mother; she'll be so cross."

"You know a'most as much as I do, Jemima. Your uncle Dick went to a grammar-school, and set up for a gentleman. All the eldest sons of the Lyonses have for generations, on account of that old baronet your father is always talking about."

"Well, you know, we *are* an old family, grandfather," said Jemima.

"So you are, my dear. Adam was a long way back, and you come straight from him. But Dick wouldn't take to farming, and they couldn't afford to make a parson or a doctor of him, so he would be a gentleman, which seems to me nowadays to mean being just nothing at all but an idler. However, Dick thought he should like to have somebody to keep him, so he made up to Miss Love, the captain's first cousin, who had a thousand pounds, independent of her aunts. I believe he got round her by his good looks, and telling her that he was a baronet. At any rate she married him in spite of her proud old father, Squire Daw, and his stiff daughters. The Cap'en and his wife, too, were uncommon angry, and, I dare say, won't like the young chap coming back.

"Dick didn't find that he could live like a gentleman in England on the thousand pounds, so he carried it and his wife to Australia. She was a very pretty, nice young woman, but not much fit for a settler. Everybody was mad about Australia, and thought they'd pick up a hundred thousand pounds there in no time; so Dick said he'd claim his title when he came back, and soon show the Daws who was grandest.

"But he never did come back, poor fellow. Your father heard from him two or three times

along at first, when he said he was doing wonders; but for the last ten or twelve years he never heard anything at all. And now here's his son, a likely lad of fifteen or sixteen, come home instead of 'un, with a box full of geological specimens—so he told me—and nothing else, I'll be bound. Dear ma'am! you aren't eating anything. Grandmother, why don't you see to Mrs. Fluke?"

"I can't prevail on her to take any more. Do, ma'am, try another egg or a slice of ham. I hope your tea was agreeable?"

"I never made such a tea in my life, ma'am. But, sir, excuse my making so bold as to ask what you meant by the baronet," said Mrs. Fluke.

"I know about that, granny," said Jemima, "so I will go now. I'll send Kern over to-morrow with the news. I wonder what cousin's like!"

Jemima disappeared to put on her bonnet.

"Not if it is a secret, sir, of course," said Fluke, who was already dying of curiosity about her new acquaintances.

"No secret in the world, ma'am. Everybody has known it and laughed at it for generations; but I've remarked, even in this out-of-the-way place—and I was never more than twenty miles away from it in my life—that a bit of blood

sticks by a man for ever, whether it came to him because his forefather was a murderer or a baronet. Dick and Job Lyons's great-great-great-great-great-grandfather—five greats, I think it is—was a live baronet. He had four sons, and very little money, so the story goes; and indeed the baronet-book tells of the sons. The youngest son was a bit of a scamp, and went off to America, where, it seems to me, all the scamps go. It must be a nice country by this time. But Australia's beginning to carry off some of 'em now as well as the convicts. I hope you haven't any relations there, ma'am?"

"I dare say I 'ave, sir; but if I 'ave I don't know 'em," said Mrs. Fluke.

"You'll excuse Joan and me clearing the table, ma'am?" said Mrs. Bull.

"To be sure. No ceremony. And the baronet, sir?"

"Well, whilst the youngest son was away, the father and the three other brothers died, having spent all they had, and sold the property. Most of this manor belonged to the family in those days; but Mr. Nux, a London chemist, bought the part of it that this farm is in, and his son bought a baronetcy, and so, I suppose, one nail knocked out the other. Squire Daw bought the Yeo portion of the estate. The youngest son,

who was now the baronet, never came back; but his son did, who knew and proved that he was the right Sir Richard Lyons, but he had no money to support the title.

"He was a bit of a farmer, and somehow managed to take the Manor Farm, which had been the family seat, but was already going down in the world, like its former owners. In that farm some or other of the Lyonses have lived ever since. It was always let from father to son, but not always to the eldest; oftener to a younger one, because the eldest managed to keep in his head this notion about the title, and was for making a gentleman of himself. I can remember three generations of Lyonses, and my father and grandfather half a dozen more; so we can trace back, ourselves, as far as the son that came from Americay, and settled here. The title has been always a joke down here in the country, and people used to call them 'Sir Richard' for fun sometimes; not but everybody has a notion that they come of better stuff than the rest of us. And there is a look about 'em all, above the common. Job, when you see him in his Sunday best, looks the gentleman, and my missus and I can't help being proud of him, though he's as lazy a chap as need be. I only hope the new lad won't be like the rest of 'em.

Perhaps another country may have turned the blood a bit."

Here, the tea-things being cleared away, the table wiped, and a pipe and tobacco-box placed upon it, Mrs. Bull brought her knitting, and sat down in one of the arm-chairs in the chimney-corner by her husband's side.

"I hope you don't object to smoking, Mrs. Fluke?" said Mr. Bull.

"Not at all, sir. I think it's agreeable and sociable of an evening. I haven't felt so comfortable for these many years."

"I am very glad of that," said Mrs. Bull. "And now, without wishing to be curious, I should like to know how my daughter in London came to know your lady, for she don't say in her letter."

"Well, ma'am, her husband, Dr. Dove, is a celebrated oculist, as you know of course, being his mother-in-law."

"Yes," said Mr. Bull, "Tom Dove is a good fellow; he went to London and got on, and then came back and married our Susan, his first love."

"Dear! how pretty! And he was very kind to my lady; he said she must be kept quiet, and go into the country for change of air. We 'ad just come from *Boulone*, and hadn't been in England for some years, so we didn't know where

to go. Dr. Dove said he thought his wife might know of a nice lodging down in Dorsetshire, so I suppose he asked her; for a few days after, he said that his father-in-law was willing to take us for a few months: and really, sir, I *was* surprised!"

"Well you might," said Mr. Bull, bluntly.

"You see," said Mrs. Bull, "Susan wrote as if Tom thought it rather a pitiful case, and said there was a dear orphan child."

"Humph!" grunted Mrs. Fluke.

"And begged me to try to get a nice lodging here in the country. Parson Lane has the only lodging I know of, and I didn't like to refuse Tom, so I thought I might oblige him, do a good turn, and buy a few presents for Rhoda's children, by taking your lady myself. You know, you didn't make any objections, grandfather."

"The women always turn me round their finger, Mrs. Fluke."

"And you know, grandfather, that you said it might be cheerful for me after our sorrow, and turn my mind away from it?"

"Yes, yes; you needn't give all the reasons at once. You women are very open-mouthed. Mrs. Fluke, I'll be bound you'll know all our family history before to-morrow night!"

"Oh, I'm not inquisitive, sir," said Mrs.

Fluke, who was longing to ask what the "sorrow" was, but refrained.

"Then I'm glad to know you, ma'am; for you're the first woman I ever heard of that wasn't."

"Well, sir, for my own part, I like everything open and straightforward; but we can't have it so in this world, so we must make the best of it, and learn to 'old our tongues."

"You're a sensible woman, ma'am, and I wish all your sex were of the same opinion—my good wife amongst 'em."

"Now, grandfather, you know that I am no more inquisitive than my neighbours," said Mrs. Bull; "but whilst we are talking, I *should* just like to ask Mrs. Fluke a little about Madam Rambully and that dear little girl, if it is allowable."

"I wish it was allowable, ma'am," said Mrs. Fluke,—her manner as candid, and the expression of her face as open, as if she were going at once to reveal all the family secrets of her mistress,—"but, at present, my lady wishes to live quite private. Of course, Dr. Dove's recommendation to you is enough for your satisfaction, and it caun't matter to anybody else w'ether she is French or English —w'ether her husband is alive or dead, or nothing at all, indeed, since we don't want to know

any neighbours, rich or poor,—more especially rich. I may say, she is a lady, as anybody may see; and if they want to know or see more, why they *caun't*, nor won't!"

"Bravo, ma'am," said Mr. Bull, laughing, and striking the table with his fist. "Now, missus, there'll be plenty to set all Yeo on fire. I can hear the daws and the magpies chattering already! Such a nest-egg for three months to come, if so be we keep together so long."

"I'm quite willing," resumed Mrs. Fluke, "that they should know all about me that I know about myself, if that may be any pleasure to them, and that's nothing at all. I never 'ad a father, or mother, or a relation in the world that I know of. I 'aven't got no lovers, and shouldn't 'ave anything to do with 'em if I 'ad. I 'ates man, as a general rule, present company excepted, of course. I've been in France, and Italy, and Scotland, and England, and found them all the same; great talkers and little doers; very cross to their wives—present company excepted, I must say again, as far as I've observed to-day,—and worse than the women, it's my firm belief, in ninety-nine cases out of an 'undred. I 'aven't 'ad any experience in my own person, but this is what I've observed in my travels. And now, ma'am, if you'd excuse me, I think I should like

to go to bed, as I've been fussing from six o'clock this morning. Good night, sir. I 'ope you won't think the worse of me for what I've said of myself."

"Not at all, ma'am," said Mr. Bull, getting up to wish his guest good-night, and shaking hands with her. "She's a queer customer, though, I take it," he added, to himself, when she had left the room.

"I should think so, grandfather," said Mrs. Bull. "I wish they had never come, with all my heart;—but I must just go and see if she's comfortable, in spite of it."

Mrs. Bull followed Mrs. Fluke to a small, snug bedroom, close to that of her mistress. Having asked if she could be of any service, or if Mrs. Fluke wanted anything, and being answered by a gratefully-expressed negative, Mrs. Bull returned to her husband.

"I don't know what to make of them," she said. "Why did Tom let them come here? To have a blind woman and a mad woman upon one's hands at once is too much of a good thing!"

"Your own fault, my dear," said Mr. Bull. "But the good lady's no more mad than thee, and a great deal more wide awake. Dostn't see that she wants to bamboozle us country bumpkins. They choose that nobody shall know any-

thing about 'em, and so they won't say anything about themselves. That's wise, I think."

"Except lies, my dear. No father or mother! why, it's quite shocking! They shan't stay a day longer than the two months—you know, Daniel, it is impossible. Never had a father or mother! The woman must be mad!"

"At any rate, we are mad to be sitting up so late. I dare say things'll look different in the morning, they always do by daylight. Let's go to bed."

And to bed they went.

CHAPTER IV.

TEN LITTLE ANGELS.

We left Lachlan Lyons at the door of the Manor Farm, surrounded by his newly-found relations. His uncle read the letter he had brought, and in doing so, more than once drew his hand across his eyes. Then he told his nephew that he must come into the house and see his aunt. When the loud call of "Rhoda" resounded through the house, a woman appeared with a baby in each arm. She followed her husband and children into a large hall, asking what they wanted.

"Here's my brother Dick's son, come all the way from Australia to pay us a visit," said Mr. Lyons, pointing to the boy.

"How d'ye do? You see I can't shake hands with you, because of these little angels," said Mrs. Lyons. "How did you leave your father and mother? I suppose they're rich people by this time?"

"They're both dead, Rhoda," said Mr. Lyons, softly, while tears sprang into Lachlan's eyes.

"Dead? Bless me! But I haven't time to talk now; everything is always left for me to do. There's Mima gone away, and Kern good for nothing, and Kezia and the boys I don't know where. I am sure I'm very glad to see you for a visit, and hope you'll make yourself at home for a week or so. You'll have ten cousins to amuse you. Kezia! Kezia! Kezia!—come and get the tea, whilst I quiet Jacob and Esau. Bless their little hearts,—how they do cry!"

At this juncture Kezia came into the room. She was in person very much like her grandfather, and rather a pretty-looking girl of fifteen.

"Kezia, get the tea, and see to your cousin," said Mrs. Lyons.

"Who is it?" whispered Kezia to Kern.

Kern told her.

She went up to Lachlan, held out her hand, and said—

"How d'ye do, cousin? I am very glad to see you. So we are all, I'm sure, only mother's too busy to say so."

Mr. Lyons slunk away when he saw Kezia shaking hands with Lachlan, who had been standing like one in a dream in the midst of his relations.

"Thank you, cousin," said he, looking into Kezia's pleasant face.

"There now, do get the tea, Kezia. The poor lad must be famishing. I hope you'll make yourself at home whilst you stay here, my dear; but you see we're so many that you must take your chances with your cousins. Do get away, Rhoda. How can I take you up with Jacob and Esau in my arms? There Kern, hold Esau for a minute, whilst I see what's the matter with Rhoda. Dear me. She's hurt her head. Kezia! Kezia! You must take Jacob."

"Shall I take him, aunt?" said Lachlan, who was laughing in spite of himself.

"Well," said Mrs. Lyons, relinquishing the roaring Jacob to him; "that's more than ever either of our boys did in their lives. They always shirk the little angels. There, Jack! Look at cousin nursing Jacob! You ought to do it for mother. See, he's quite quiet."

"I'll do to tousin," cried Rhoda, jumping off her mother's lap, and running to Lachlan.

"Perhaps you'd like to have Esau too," said Kern, turning round a pair of singular-looking eyes upon her cousin.

"I don't think I could nurse three, but I'll try," said the boy, looking for the first time at Kern.

She carried the roaring baby to him with perfect gravity, and he was about to take it, when the mother interfered, and asked Kern why she could never make herself useful like any one else.

"The twins don't like me, mother, and I hate babies," was the reply.

"The little angels! you're an unnatural girl, Kern. Well! where are those two boys? They ought to be home from school by this time. Jack, go and see if you can find Mark and Luke. And tell father and Matthew that tea's ready. Now, Kern; do go and help Molly with the milking. There's Kezia has tea ready in no time, and you never do anything; and Jemima away, and your cousin come, and poor dear Mrs. Raven dead, and mother having those lodgers, and the twins so cross, and everything to fret one."

"I hope you like nursing, cousin," said Kern, paying no attention to her mother's orders.

"Tea's ready, so pray give me the baby, cousin," said Kezia, taking the now crowing Jacob from Lachlan. To the general comfort, she soon put him to sleep, and into a cradle in the corner of the room.

Mr. Lyons and his eldest son Matthew now came in, and were soon followed by Jack and two other boys, who both exclaimed—

"Where's our new cousin?" and began staring at him with four large black eyes.

Matthew shook hands with him, and informed him that he was glad to see him, because he wanted to hear all about Australia, where he was going.

"Now, Matthew, don't be talking of that again. You'll be the death of your poor mother, you know you will," said Mrs. Lyons, beginning to cry.

"He don't mean it, Rhoda," growled Mr. Lyons.

"But I do, father," began Matthew, when Kezia begged them all to sit down to tea.

During the meal, Lachlan had time to look at his relations. He had Jack and Rhoda on each side of him, the school-boys opposite, and Kern not far off, who glanced at him when she was quite sure he was not looking at her. He formed much the same notion of his uncle, aunt, and cousins, that I should have done at first sight, which was as follows:

Mr. Lyons was a good-looking, dark man, with rather a cross expression of face. "Bothered," would, perhaps, be a better term than cross. He evidently felt his ten children a heavy load. The twinkle in the corner of the eye, denoting that fun was somewhere to be found in him, did not

agree with this other, and perhaps, less natural expression. He was evidently careless in his dress and appearance, still he had the air of a gentleman, spoke very good grammar, and gave one the idea that he had received at least a tolerable education.

His wife, who had been probably once like her father, had lost his pleasant expression, and gained in its place, one of discontent and peevishness. She was fretful both in manner and face.

Matthew, the eldest born, was a fine, manly youth of eighteen, with some intelligence, and much determination in his clear grey eyes.

Jemima we were introduced to at the Downs Farm, although Lachlan was not.

Kezia looked, and apparently was, the good girl of the family. Most families have, fortunately, one such good girl in them, who is generally the household drudge: a willing one it may be, and therefore a happy one, but still the drudge. Hers was a face you could look at with pleasure. Gentle, frank, and honest, you felt that you could trust it.

The third girl, Kern's, was more enigmatical. She possessed all the beauty of her grandmother. Lachlan could not help looking at her again and again, and she was conscious that he did so. She had changed her frock, arranged her hair, and

generally adorned herself since he saw her first; and he thought he had never seen any girl so handsome before. She had a very light and graceful figure, and was elegant in her general appearance.

Mark and Luke were rosy little men, who talked about what Mr. Eagles had said to them, and what Miss Eagles had said of Kern, because she had not been to school—ate immoderately, and stared at Lachlan.

Jack and Rhoda were a couple of spoilt children, but certainly paid Lachlan more attention than any one else except Kezia. They forced eggs and ham, bread and butter, cream and sugar, upon him, whether he would have them or not, and nobody attempted to check them.

The twins were so much alike that it was impossible to distinguish Esau from Jacob. They were fretful children, and seemed to be imbibing more of their mother's temperament than the rest had done, who were, on the whole, good-humoured enough, though each with a will of his own.

The hall in which they were assembled, was a fine relic of a past age and old manorial splendour. The walls were covered with black panelled oak; the ceiling was handsomely ornamented with wreaths and groups of wood carving, and two or three half-defaced family portraits in

frames, that once were white, hung upon the panels. A huge, carved mantelpiece surmounted the wide space that led into the chimney corner, if indeed *corner* that could be called, which was in itself a small room; and the customary settle half encircled it. The floor was also of oak, but not polished, as in the days of the baronets. A large latticed window with massive stone framework, looked into the garden and up to the church, with two oriel windows nearly opposite, looking down upon sloping fields through which ran the river Yeo.

The room and its inmates had a curious air of faded aristocracy. Years and years ago, the ancestors of those same people, must have lived in that same hall under very different circumstances; and Lachlan pictured to himself stately ladies in stiff brocades, and gentlemen in breeches and knee-buckles, where he now saw his yeoman relatives.

When tea was over, the farm-work done, the twins both asleep, and twilight come on, there was a temporary quiet in that ancient room, and the picture deepened into reality. All the party crowded round the cheerful fire on the hearth. In two old carved, high-backed oak chairs, which had, for some reason or other, always been let with the house, the master and mistress sat,

opposite one another. The children lounged on the settle, climbed their parents' knees, or crouched on low stools, as suited their fancy; whilst Lachlan found himself on a small bench in the corner, with his cousin Kern by his side, and his uncle next to them. Kezia had one of the twins on her lap, and her mother the other.

The flames from the large logs of wood that lay across the two bright steel dogs on the hearth threw a glow on the faces of the young people, and a dim, mysterious light on the dark walls and ceiling behind them. To Lachlan, who had been accustomed to a settler's life in huts or tents, this sort of room was as new as were the faces and manners of his relations; and he peered from corner to corner, and from figure to figure with an inquisitive gaze that seemed to amuse his cousin Kern, who watched him incessantly.

As they were obliged to be tolerably quiet whilst Mr. Lyons took his evening nap, there was time for observation; but he awoke up suddenly, and startled the party by saying, "Now, Dick, tell us about Australia."

"My name is Lachlan, uncle."

"What! where did you get such an outlandish name?"

"My father thought Richard had been always

unlucky, so he christened me after an Australian river, on the banks of which I was born."

"On the bank of a river?"

"Yes; in a tent."

The attention of the whole party was effectually aroused, and Lachlan Lyons was questioned and cross-questioned by his relations, concerning his own and his parents' history, in a way that it would be tedious to pursue in his and their words; so I will give the substance of the conversation in my own.

Mr. and Mrs. Lyons, Lachlan's parents, were amongst the earliest settlers in that part of Australia, where they first pitched their tent. The country was then little known; and as Mr. Lyons was a man of adventure, rather than of plodding industry, he roved about from place to place with the various explorers; who went, one after another, to trace the sources of rivers, and to make this continent better known to the world.

Shortly after he and his wife reached Australia, Lachlan was born on the banks of the river, the name of which was given to him.

His mother, always a delicate woman, could not stand the hard, unsettled life to which she was subjected, and died about three years after his birth. As long as she lived, Mr. Lyons tried

his best to get on as a farmer, and to acquire the fortune he emigrated, professedly, to seek; but, when she was removed, he let his more natural bent have way, and, accompanied by his boy, wandered about from place to place.

In this way he gained a good deal of knowledge both of the country and aborigines, which was frequently of great service to others, whose express object was discovery; whilst to himself it procured the excitement of change, and a certain reputation. Everybody knew that he was, by right, a baronet, and accorded him the rank he so much coveted. He assumed and retained his title; and, by its aid, became a man of some mark, inasmuch as people fancied he too was an explorer.

Lachlan grew up, under these auspices, a daring, self-dependent boy. He had seen men of learning and note, and been noticed by them; and had been mixed up as a child with the expeditions of Captain Sturt and Major Mitchell, and had imbibed, not only their love of discovery, but some of their knowledge. He had acquired a taste for geology and engineering, and had picked up a certain desultory education, and a smattering, at least, of most things.

But, when he was about fifteen, his father died, and left his commands upon him to return to

England, to seek out his uncle, and never to forget the baronetcy.

So he gathered his few effects together, packed up a large chest of specimens, and worked his way home from Australia, in a merchant vessel.

As he could turn his hand to anything, he had found friends on his voyage; and amongst them, some who had lent him books, which were almost a novel luxury to him; for of books his father thought but little; and to go to school, and procure new books were the great desires of his soul when he arrived at Yeo.

He had seen so much, and had such a vivid way of describing what he had seen, and the life that he had lived, that all his hearers continued to listen and question untiringly. His uncle forgot his nap, his aunt forgot the twins, the cousins forgot to squabble and dispute; even Kezia forgot her work to look at him, as he sat amongst them telling his varied tale.

Jemima had returned, almost unnoticed, and taken her place amongst them, soon forgetting her displeasure at being told by her father to sit down and not make a noise, in her interest in the speaker.

There was a general demand for the box of specimens, but this Lachlan refused to open so late at night. He seemed to have a will of his

own, and to be resolved to assert his independence. He said that he had letters and small parcels from his father to the Miss Daws, Mrs. Love, and one of the Mr. Bats, that he must deliver on the morrow; also that he had left a beautiful parrot, some small birds, a dog, and another box of specimens, in the care of a sailor at Southampton, because he was afraid that his aunt might not like to have them.

"Do you know anything about your relations?" asked his uncle. "Because I should take care how I went near them, if I were you."

"I only know that they are my relations, and that my father told me to deliver his letters myself."

"Better not," said Mr. Lyons, shortly. He had a curt manner always. "I'll give you a hint. Your mother was the Miss Daws' niece, and Mrs. Love's cousin. Mr. Nicholas Bat wanted to marry her. Dick married her in spite of them all. Daws, Bats, and Loves will look but coldly upon you, I take it."

"I am better than they."

"How so?"

"Why, I am a baronet!"

"Ho, ho! you're inoculated, I see. Better leave that old story in Australia; you'll only be laughed at."

"I don't care for being laughed at. I am Sir Lachlan Lyons, and everybody shall know that before I die."

Mr. Lyons laughed a grim laugh, and the children set up a general shout; all save Kern, who said quietly, "Quite right, cousin. I shall call you Sir Lachlan always. How grand it sounds!"

"I hope he'll get a new coat first," said Matthew.

"And have his hair cut," quoth Mark.

"And learn to dance, and say 'How do,' like young Nux," said Luke.

A great frown fell over Master Lachlan's face.

"My coat and hair have done for better people than I am likely to meet here," he said; "and you'd all better beware how you bully me."

"By all means, *Sir* Lachlan," said Matthew.

"Hold your tongues, boys," said Mr. Lyons. "I suppose you have the family tree, nephew?"

"Yes, uncle. Father gave it to me. He always carried it with him. I don't care for being called *Sir*, cousin," he added, turning to Matthew, "but right's right, and I mean to fight for mine."

"'Twill be a lost battle, boy," said Mr. Lyons. "Why, I dare say you haven't a pound in the world?"

"Then I'll make one, uncle."

"Ho, ho, ho!" laughed Mr. Lyons.

"I am sure that is not to be laughed at," said Mrs. Lyons. "I wish our boys would make money. They can all spend it fast enough. There's that blessed Esau waking up; and Jack and Rhoda fast asleep. Put them to bed, Jemima—you've done nothing all day."

"Law, mother, I can't! I haven't spoken to cousin, yet. Kezia will go."

"Tell us about grandmother's lodgers, Mima," said Luke. "What are they like?"

"I saw nothing but a blue woman, with a great shade and goggles over her eyes, and a little ugly girl. They shut themselves up in the parlour, and their servant waited upon them."

"Do you call that an ugly little girl, cousin?" said Lachlan. "Why she's the prettiest young lady I've seen since I've been in England."

Kern looked indignant.

"No great compliment to us," said Jemima, laughing; "and you must have queer beauties in your country."

"Was that all you saw?" asked Matthew.

"Yes; except a lady's-maid, that grandmother must needs ask to tea with us."

"I wouldn't have had my tea with the servant, if I couldn't have had it with the ladies,"

said Kern. "Such a low thing of grandmother to have lodgers at all! I wonder Aunt Ann let her do it."

"Now have your supper and go to bed, children," said Mr. Lyons; and by degrees the party broke up.

CHAPTER V.

ALINE'S DISCOVERIES.

"MAMMA is asleep on the sofa, and I am going to explore, Fluke," said Aline, on the afternoon of the day after their arrival at the Downs.

"You shaun't go out by yourself, Miss Aline," said Fluke.

"Yes, I shall. Now don't make a noise and wake mamma. I am not going out of sight of the house, and I shall have plenty to tell mamma when I come in. I wish I could get this old dog to move. Wolf—Wolf—come, Wolf."

"Wolf—Wolf—come, Wolf," shrieked a voice from the hall.

"How rude," said Aline, looking round.

"T' only Jack, Miss," said Joan, coming out of the back kitchen and opening the jackdaw's cage.

Out hopped Jack, perched upon Wolf's back,

and succeeded in waking him up by pecking at his hair.

"Here be zome meat, Miss; him will do a moast any thing for meat," said Joan.

Aline presented the meat at a distance, and with a little management, succeeded in alluring Wolf into the garden, with Jack demurely seated on his back. Having divided the meat between them, she further coaxed them to follow her, and in due course of time, had the satisfaction of Jack's more intimate neighbourhood, for he ended by allowing her to put him on her shoulder.

Thus the trio began their acquaintance: but before Aline finally left the garden she returned Jack to his cage.

It was pretty to see her little quaint figure moving about, with Jack on her shoulder, and Wolf at her heels. We must, perforce, follow her.

First into the little arbour of honeysuckles, with its sweet perfume, and trim round arch. Here she sat down a while, and talked to Jack. Thence to the flower-beds that surrounded the arbour. Here were large orange lilies, and globed red peonies, opening in their splendour; purple columbines, and many-coloured polyanthuses in full bloom; lavender, ever sweet, in

profusion; and an especial bed of lilies of the valley, full of green leaves and pure white bells. Behind the arbour, and hanging their blossoms over it, were white and purple lilacs; the yellow-flowered barberry, the snow-balled gelderose, the golden-drop laburnum, and the white elder. Amongst these honied children of nature the bees were buzzing, and above and around them the birds were singing in full chorus.

Somewhere at the back a brook was heard to murmur, whither, led by its music, Aline repaired. She found it bubbling briskly over its stony antagonists, beneath hawthorn bushes in full flower; maples, beeches, and mountain-ashes also shooting forth their May adornments, with primroses and violets at their feet.

What was there not in that farm-house garden to rejoice such a child as Aline? She resolved at once to live and die at the Downs.

Here, again, were cherry-trees in profusion, rich with their white promises of fruit; raspberry, gooseberry, and currant bushes, putting forth their green foreshadows of future harvests; and the lowlier strawberry-blossom, equally prophetic.

Aline was through the little garden-gate and up the Down, whilst Fluke was shaking her head at her from under the thatch of her bedroom window, where the swallows had just come home

to their deserted nests, and were beginning, industriously, to repair them.

Aline looked back and nodded, and then stooped to gather some blue harebells that sprung up at her feet. Once at the top of that airy Down, how could the child best show her joy at the exhilarating life she breathed? By taking hold of Wolf's fore-paws, and dancing with the old dog as long as he would let her.

Then down again into the garden: one peep, on tiptoe, into the parlour-window to see that her mother was still sleeping; another nod in answer to Fluke's remonstrance—and she was through the house, and into the barton. She ran across the barton—heedless of Mrs. Bull's warning from the hall, that it was very dirty—and reached the orchard. Here, again, was food for delight. Over-head, the pink and white coverlet of May, blooming; at her feet, the sweet woodruf, and violets; on the trunks of the old apple-trees, pale-green mistletoe in abundance; in the hedge-rows, foxgloves opening, wild geraniums, and ragged-robins peeping out, and hawthorn and honeysuckles everywhere. On one side, again, the brook babbling its never-ceasing tale of the seasons amongst the sedges; and all around the green meadows.

Following the brook, she found herself at the end of the orchard, whence a stile and some large stepping-stones led across the brook. She thought she should be out of sight of the house if she went further, so she turned, went through a gate, and found herself in a large meadow in front of the farm. Here the cows were quietly grazing. She threaded her way amongst them till she came to a gate on the opposite side, which led into a rough field-lane, the only approach to the house. At the bottom of this lane was a wide space, crossed again by a shallow portion of the brook. Here Aline paused and looked round her with sudden awe. It was shadowed by six large, thick elms, which cast their heavy gloom on the hitherto merry little stream and seemed to terrify it, as they did Aline, into temporary quiet; for it crept noiselessly across the way, quaint and drear, and did not regain its spirits until it had hidden itself among some brushwood on the other side, and finally emerged at the foot of another meadow.

At the left of this little weird dell was the cheerful farm; on the right, an old dissenting chapel. It was a curious spot for such a building; but there it had been for more than a couple of centuries, and thither itinerant preachers occasionally repaired, to entice the church-goers

from the Downs church on one side, and Yeo on the other.

Aline climbed the little padlocked gate, and went into the small enclosure that surrounded it, where some five or six graves attested that it was a chapel and not a farm-building. It was a gloomy place. The elms cast their broad shadows on it in front, and a small plantation of firs hedged it in behind: still it was a quiet and solemn spot for worship.

But Aline did not like it, and returning to the lane, picked her way across the shallow brook on some stepping-stones, and ran till she found herself in the cheerful farm-yard at the side of the house.

Here she was happy again. Mrs. Bull made her appearance with an apron full of grain, which was soon transferred to Aline's large pinafore, and she was feeding cocks and hens, geese and turkeys, before she knew what she was about, laughing heartily in her innocent glee.

Brightly did the May sun look down, across hay-ricks and corn-stacks, barns and granaries—upon the little maiden in her poked, curtained bonnet; and brightly did her glad eyes return his glance.

"Oh! I am so happy, dear Mrs. Bull," was all she could say. "I hope mamma will be happy, too."

Mrs. Bull was going to call her husband in to tea, and Aline went with her across another gate, and into a ploughed field where the master and some of his men were engaged in sowing turnips. Aline reached him long before his wife did, and taking his earth-covered hand, returned with him to the farm-yard.

Here were Lachlan Lyons and Kern, just arrived from Yeo.

Aline ran up to Lachlan, and said, "How do you do? I hope your uncle was kind!" whilst Kern spoke to her grandmother, and Mr. Bull washed his hands in our friend—the brook—that somehow had found its way into the farm-yard.

The two girls glanced at one another.

"Is that one of your cousins?" asked Aline of Lachlan, upon whom she evidently looked as an old friend. "How very pretty she is!"

Lachlan seemed to have lost some of his customary boldness, as he looked down upon the child. He however answered her, and asked for her mother.

"Oh! here is Fluke coming to look for me," said Aline. "Good-bye. I hope they will be kind to you. Good-bye, little girl," she added, nodding to Kern.

"Why do you take up with those sort of people?" said Fluke. "I never saw such a child."

"I think they are very nice people, Fluke. I love Mr. and Mrs. Bull and that boy very much already."

"Very quick work; but your mamma's awake, and wants you now. I hope you've had enough ranting and tearing for one afternoon."

One other picture before we close this chapter.

Madame Rambouillet sat looking languid and despondent, in a large, old-fashioned chair, by the open window, her bonnet and veil, as usual, by her side. She was dressed with exquisite neatness, and her hair smooth in plait and curls as softest silk. Still the dark blue dress and shade.

"How long? how long?" she muttered to herself. "Have I found rest here? Or must I wander about for ever, blind and worse than widowed? Faith will not come to me—hope cannot. Patience and resignation, I know them not. But rest! There is something gained in this external peace and quiet. Something in hearing those birds sing and feeling this spring air, once more in England. But, beyond this, to have nothing to cheer or brighten life, is hard indeed!"

Blind mother! how could you say those last words? Just as they were said, or thought, Aline's arms were around her neck, and her

warm kisses on her lips. She, too, had been made neat as the trimmest of young ladies, before she joined her mother. She brought with her sprays of every flower she had seen. She put them into her mother's hand, on her lap, in her bosom. Violets, lilacs, lilies of the valley, exhaled their varied odours for the blind lady, and seemed to give her momentary pleasure. Soon the old-fashioned china cups that adorned the mantelpiece were filled, and scattered about the pretty room by Aline's busy fingers, she meanwhile, describing vividly everything she was doing—each flower as she arranged it.

Then she sat down at her mother's feet, and minutely told her all she had seen that afternoon. The objects I have feebly tried to describe grew into life out of the loving mind of the little girl.

Then she fetched in Jack; but Jack, as is usual on such occasions, would not make himself agreeable, and would not take to the mother as he had done to the child, but screamed so loud that they were obliged to send him back to his cage. Then Wolf was tried, who was equally intractable, and preferred the chimney corner in the hall to the parlour carpet. Finally, at Aline's urgent request, Tom was brought in. He being of a softer temperament, seemed to

like madame's silk gown, and settled himself very comfortably on her lap, to Aline's great joy, who rewarded him by a saucerfull of fresh milk at tea-time. This, however, did not give him the pleasure that it would have afforded a less fortunate animal. "Her was a'moast tired of milk," Joan said; "her was zo creazed." Tom took after his mistress, who didn't like cream in her tea, she supposed, because she had seen so much of it all her life, and had had so much work to turn it into butter. Something like cooks, who never enjoy the meat they have dressed.

CHAPTER VI.

RICH RELATIONS.

"How d'ye do, Aunt Ann? Very well, thank you. How d'ye do, Aunt Margery? Very well, thank you. How d'ye do, Aunt Harriet? Very well, thank you. The Captain's as cross as he can be, my dear. The gout in his little toe just now. I wish there was no such a thing in the world as toes. I can't stay a minute, but I just slipped in to see you, and ask about the news, and whether you have heard that Dick Lyons's son—poor Sophy, you know,—I could never look upon him as her husband, or the boy as her son—yes, really, my dears, this boy is come home from Australia, and come straight to Mr. Lyons's, as if he hadn't children enough already. We don't mean to notice him in any way; and we feel sure you don't. Margaret Ann saw him, and says he is a shabby-looking, common boy; and we have told her

and Robert not to take any notice of him. And the Captain says—oh! if you could but know how cross he has been! swearing over that article in the 'Dorset Director,' and declaring he'll horsewhip the Editor! But I really can't stay. Oh! have you heard about the lodgers at the Downs Farm? They say they're French. So odd of Mrs. Bull to have such people down here. Nobody knows what they are; and of course nobody will think of calling. I asked Farmer Bull about them just now. I went for a walk over the Downs into his turnip fields, where I knew he was,—for I was determined to find out something,—and all he knew was, that their name was Rambully—such a name—not French, I am sure,—and that they were very grand people, come over here on account of some French revolution—and the Captain says there's no revolution in France at all now, though there may be to-morrow, for that much, which is all the same,—and that their maid—I don't believe she is their maid—ladies with maids don't come into such lodgings. But you know Farmer Bull; one can never find out whether he's joking or not. But I shan't call, unless they bring introductions. I declare I must go. What will the Captain think? Oh, I suppose you know the funeral's to be on Friday. I suppose you'll put on black,

out of compliment? I shall. They say there's no comforting Mr. Raven. His sister Ellen's come; and what use can she be with those troublesome children? But you've been there, haven't you, Aunt Harriet? The Captain thought it was rather soon. But do tell me about them, please?"

As Mrs. Love, the lady who made the above rapid speech, was suddenly brought to a halt by an impulse of curiosity, we, too, must pause a moment to recover our breath, before proceeding further.

Mrs. Love had come to call on her aunts, the three Miss Daws. She was a portly woman, with a pert, but good-natured expression of countenance. The aspiring turn of her nose probably deserved the former adjective, and her round, rosy cheeks the latter.

Her three aunts were remarkable in their way. Miss Ann Daw was tall, thin, and stately, sharp-featured, and deep-voiced. Miss Margaret Daw, —or, as she was familiarly called, Margery, it was supposed in memory of her celebrated namesake—was so like Miss Ann that she does not require a second description. They were dressed alike, in dark brown silk gowns, fitting tightly to the shape; very large lace caps surrounding their faces like wings; enormous white collars,

reaching in points to their shoulders, on either side of the neck, and light brown fronts, with short curls.

Miss Harriet Daw was, in appearance, very different from her sisters. She was a mild and gentle-looking woman, attired in a grey silk gown of less tight fit, and a cap and collar of smaller dimensions. She wore her own hair, in curls, and it was rather grey, as if to match her dress. Perhaps she was pretty in her youth, perhaps she was not; perhaps she was crossed in love, perhaps she never had a lover; we speculate, it matters not much. But she had a calm serenity about her face which was all but angelic.

The room in which these ladies sat was stiff and gloomy. It looked out upon a lawn at the back of the house, at the end of which, on an elevation, grew the dark trees that had displeased Aline. In these trees some half-dozen rooks had made their abode for generations, and in their perpetual caw, caw, the Misses Daw found a music as aristocratic as it was pleasing. If the mischievous boys of the village did all they could to frighten these sacred birds, the ladies did their best to re-assure them; and not unfrequently Mr. Raven was called in to settle accounts with Daws and rooks versus his young

parishioners. It may be well imagined that various puns were afloat touching these dark-feathered birds.

Miss Harriet was just beginning to explain to her niece that she had been to the Vicarage to see if she could be of any use to the poor mourners, when a double knock resounded through the house.

A man servant in brown livery appeared, with a suppressed grin on his face, and announced, looking at Miss Daw as he did so, "Sir Lacklelans, ladies."

"Who?" ejaculated the Misses Daw and Mrs. Love, in a breath.

"I don't know, ma'am. 'Tis a boy, and that's what he said."

"Show him in," said Miss Ann, adjusting her collar and taking off her spectacles.

Our young friend Lachlan appeared, with a letter in his hand. They all stared at him without speaking, except Miss Harriet, who rose, bowed, and put him a chair.

Miss Ann and Miss Margery were sitting side by side at a round table, with work-baskets before them. Mrs. Love was close to them. Lachlan stood at some distance, opposite the trio.

As no one spoke, Miss Harriet ventured to ask timidly what he wanted.

"I am Sir Lachlan Lyons," he said, boldly enough. "My father begged me to deliver this letter into the hands of my great-aunts, the Miss Daws. I believe I am right in bringing it here. I came to do his bidding."

"Oh!" said Miss Ann, taking up an eye-glass and looking at Lachlan.

"Oh!" said Miss Margery, also raising hers.

"Oh, oh!" echoed Mrs. Love.

Lachlan put the letter on the table.

"Perhaps you will be good enough to see that it is all right," said Lachlan, his face suddenly becoming crimson.

Miss Ann deliberately put on her glasses, and broke the seal of the letter.

"Won't you sit down?" said Miss Harriet, in a half-whisper.

"No, thank you, ma'am," said Lachlan, continuing to stand, while the letter was opened, and three small packets were laid upon the table.

Miss Ann read the letter with rigid features, and passed it on to Miss Margery, who did the same, and passed it on to Miss Harriet, who also read it, and began to cry.

"We can do nothing for you, boy," said Miss Ann, grimly.

"Certainly not," said Miss Margery.

"I do not want anything done for me," said Lachlan. "My father sent you some presents in memory of my mother, and when you have seen that they have arrived safely, I will go."

Miss Ann opened the parcel, and found that it contained a brooch, a locket, and a ring.

"Presents we made our niece, sister," said Miss Ann.

"He couldn't do less," said Miss Margery. "There were plenty more."

"What did he do with her fortune, I wonder?" said Miss Ann.

"And what did he do with her?" said Miss Margery.

"I wonder at his daring to write to us, sister," said Miss Ann.

"And to send his boy," said Miss Margery.

"But it is her son, sisters," said Miss Harriet, timidly.

"What is that to us?" said Miss Ann.

"A poor beggar," said Miss Margery.

During this conversation Lachlan was growing redder and redder. At the last words his wrath burst forth.

"I am no beggar," he said, resolutely; "and I am your grand-nephew. I asked nothing of you, ladies, and you might have been civil, at least. If you had come to us in Australia, we

should have done our best for you; but as long as I have arms and head I can work. I wish you good morning."

Lachlan turned on his heel, and with indignant step and look left the room. Miss Harriet followed him.

"Nephew," she said.

He turned round.

"I am very sorry that we have seemed so unkind, but if ever I can be of use to you, I will."

"I want no help; I only ask for kindness," said Lachlan. "Good morning."

"One moment. I love you for your mother's sake—I think I could do so for your own."

"And my father? I remember him—not my mother. I would not have the love of any one who hated him."

"I never did. They had a right to marry, he and your mother; they loved one another."

"Yes, my father loved my mother to his dying day."

"Harriet! sister!" cried a shrill voice, as the parlour door opened.

It was Miss Margery.

"Good-bye," said Miss Harriet, holding out her hand.

Lachlan seized it in both his, made a very

hideous face at Miss Margery, as she peered through the doorway, and disappeared.

Kern was waiting for him on the other side of the dull pond that faced the house.

"Well, cousin, what of the three maiden Daws?" she asked, with her queer satirical manner.

No answer.

"*They* didn't call you 'Sir Lachlan,' or 'my dear nephew?' You thought father and mother and us cold enough, but the old birds were colder. I hate them. Now, take my advice, and don't go to the Loves."

"I shall go, cousin. Do you think I'm afraid?" said Lachlan, forcing himself to speak stoutly.

"Here you are then," said Kern, stopping before the house surrounded by the high box hedge already mentioned.

Lachlan went up the short drive alone, and rang the bell. The servant stared as he announced himself as Sir Lachlan Lyons. She said her mistress was out, but her master was at home. It was all the same, said Lachlan. She went to her master, and after some delay, returned, and told Lachlan he would see him.

"So, so, you're Dick Lyons's son, I suppose," greeted him in a gruff voice.

He could not at first see the speaker, who was

sitting in a large easy chair, with its back towards the door.

"I've heard of you. Come here. Tell me about Australia. I've an article on emigration coming out in the 'Dorset Director.' Take care of my toe. Zounds, sir, you've touched the flannel! Margaret Ann! Margaret Ann!"

A young lady got up from a work-table in the corner, and went to the large chair which faced the window.

"Put a seat for the boy. Where's your mother? She's always out gossiping. Sit down, sir. Farther off. Don't come near me, or I shall be sure to knock you down. Now tell me something of Australia."

"It is a much finer country than England, and the natives are so much more polite than the English, that I wish I was back there again."

"What! the aborigines?"

"Yes, sir. I have often been amongst them, and they never threatened to knock me down."

"Are they subject to the gout?"

"No, I believe not. I once heard a clever man say that was one of the curses of civilization."

"Very fine! What do you know of clever men?'

"I have seen a great many in Australia."

"Ha! ha! a set of scamps who can't get on in their own country. What part were you in?"

"The south-west."

At this juncture Mrs. Love entered the room.

"Only think," she said, not perceiving Lachlan, "that boy Lyons from Australia has been to see aunts. They are in such a way. I was there; he is just like one of the convicts from Botany Bay, only he hasn't any blue marks."

"Hush, mamma," said Margaret Ann, pointing to the window.

Lachlan came forward.

"Don't touch my chair," roared the Captain.

"Did you ever see a convict, ma'am?" asked Lachlan.

"Goodness gracious, how you frightened me!" said Mrs. Love, going up to her husband, and whispering to him so audibly that Lachlan heard every word she said.

"You mustn't have anything to say to the boy, for aunts don't mean to notice him. Margaret Ann's in great favour just now, and even Bob isn't so much out of the good books as he was. It would be all over if we offended them, and you never saw anything like the way aunt Ann gave it to Harriet after he was gone, because she noticed him—a low-bred, vulgar, con-

vict she called him; because you know they are all transported over there."

"If you please, ma'am, my father sent you this," said Lachlan, delivering a letter to Mrs. Love, with anything but the air of a convict.

"Oh! very well; thank you. I dare say it is the chain I gave my cousin."

"Will you open it, ma'am, that you may be sure?"

Mrs. Love opened the small parcel; displayed a gold chain, at sight of which Margaret Ann looked animated, and glanced through the letter. It contained a few lines purporting to present the chain as a remembrance of the writer's wife, and asking for a kind welcome for that wife's son.

Mrs. Love was a good-hearted woman, but she never had, and never would, offend her aunts. Had they not money to leave, and houses to leave, and landed property to leave, and were not Bob and Margaret Ann amongst their nearest relations? Who could expect her to be civil to a boy to whom they were not civil? More especially as that boy's mother, her first cousin, was their favourite niece?

When she read the letter her heart softened a little, but when she looked at Lachlan, and saw that, despite his convict abode, there was some-

thing out of the common in his broad, massive forehead and keen, clear eyes, that flashed on her as he read her countenance; it hardened again. Had she not a son with a forehead, brows, and eyes? What mattered it if they were not quite so remarkable?

So she gave the letter to her husband, and said, with some confusion—

"Thank you; it is all right: but you see we have children of our own, and your natural protector is your uncle, and we are quite in a different sphere, and we never knew much of your father, who married our cousin without the consent of her friends; and, in short, you see, Captain Love, it is out of our power to help him, is it not?"

"Certainly, certainly," growled the Captain.

"I should think so!" interjected Margaret Ann, with a toss of four very long pale ringlets.

Lachlan got into a passion. There was now no mistake about it.

"One would think I was a beggar," he cried, his thick eyebrows knitting, and his eyes kindling from beneath them; "but I am not. I want no one's help. I did not ask for it. I have earned my bread these eighteen months, and I can earn it still. If this is Old England that my father used to talk so much about, I wish I had never

come here. I would rather have been tortured by an Australian native. Good morning, sir. Good morning, ma'am."

As Lachlan spoke he drew nearer and nearer to the cushioned stool, on which rested Captain Love's gouty foot. Whether designedly or undesignedly, I will not say, he stumbled over the stool as he passed it, and in so doing, gave a shock to the invalid member that none but the gout-stricken could fully appreciate.

"I beg your pardon," he muttered, as he hurried out of the room, followed by such a cannonade of oaths as he had never had fired into him before.

"My dear! the horrid boy!" "Oh, papa! Put it so! The brute! Which flannel! A little medicine!" "Hold your tongues, you fools! Get out of the way!" were phrases that reached Lachlan as he walked through the hall, and down the gravel walk, and in his heart I am afraid that he rejoiced at having had his revenge.

Kern was waiting for him at the bottom of the road.

"This way, cousin, over the Downs," she said. "How do you like your new relations? Oh! the Loves don't seem to have been much more loving than old Margery. Isn't Margaret Ann a beauty? And you should see Bob!"

Kern saw that her cousin was very angry, and said no more. They got upon the Downs, and walked some way in silence.

At last Lachlan's face cleared, and he stopped to look at the prospect. Whether the rich vale of Marchmoor, with the river winding through it, and the wide extent of country spread out beneath him, reminded him of some scene in Australia, or whether the excitement of the day had been too great for his resolution, I cannot say, but at that moment he was overcome. He sat down on the dry turf, covered his face with his hands, and sobbed.

Kern stood by and wondered. She was not herself given to tears, and could not apparently sympathise with them.

"They are not worth crying about, cousin," she said. "We are fifty times better than they."

But she had not touched the spring of the tears, so could not help to dry them.

"You will do very well with us, cousin. Father and mother are neither Daws nor Loves."

Seeing that she did no good by talking, the girl was wise enough to hold her tongue.

At last the sobbing ceased.

"I beg your pardon, cousin," said Lachlan. "I am ashamed of myself. But father thought so much of me, and took such trouble to write

those letters, and was so sure they would be kind to me, that I could not help it. I hope he does not know it where he is. And I am afraid I was rude, and not the gentleman he told me always to be."

"I'm sure I hope you were. You had better not go to the Lodge. I don't think the Bats are much better than the rest. I can leave the letter for you."

"No, thank you; I will go through with what father told me to do."

Lachlan got up and walked on.

"You know, cousin, that Mr. Nicholas Bat was in love with your mother, and wanted to marry her. Perhaps he mightn't like to see you."

Lachlan glanced at Kern as if wondering how such a thought had come into the head of so young a girl; but the handsome face was quite unconscious of its owner having made any remarkable speech.

"He has had time enough to forget that."

"But he never married any one else!"

"Oh!" suddenly exclaimed Lachlan, running with all his might away from Kern, up the Down.

Kern ran after him. When she came up with him, he was standing in a great state of excite-

ment, amongst some heaps of stone and elevations of earth that were scattered here and there on the Downs. He had forgotten Daws, Loves, and Bats.

"These must be the old Roman remains my father told me of. Hurrah! I don't care for anything now. A Roman camp; strata of chalk and oolite; everything new and different from Australia. Kern, can you tell me the date of this?"

"It has been here ever since I can remember. What can you see in those stupid stones? If you don't come on we shall never get to the Downs Farm in time for tea."

Thus adjured, Lachlan went on, casting longing glances behind him at the old Roman encampment on which he had so happily stumbled.

CHAPTER VII.

A TRIO OF BACHELORS.

The Downs Lodge was a country-house, prettily situated, with the Downs at its back and sides, and the rich vale of Marchmoor beneath. It was surrounded by plantations, and had a small farm appended to it. The eldest Mr. Bat was a great farmer; the second, Mr. Nicholas Bat, a great sportsman; and the third, Mr. Oliver Bat, a great reader, and somewhat of a beau.

As it chanced, Lachlan and Kern fell in with them all, but not together. They were never together except at breakfast and dinner, though three brothers more attached to one another were not to be found.

Mr. Bat was standing in the middle of a field of saintfoin, with a large retriever by his side, as the young pair walked through the said field.

"Doesn't he look more like a scarecrow than a gentleman?" said Kern.

"Halloo, young ones!" cried Mr. Bat, "don't trample my crop."

He walked towards them.

"Oh! is that you, little Miss Kern?" he said, good-humouredly. "Which brother is this? I don't know his face."

Of all the Lyons family, Kern was the one that no one ever forgot. The rest were mistaken one for another—mis-called—or quite unnoticed; but every one stopped to speak to Kern.

"It is my cousin from Australia, Mr. Bat," said Kern.

She, too, was the only member of her family who disdained to put "Sir" or "Ma'am" when she addressed a superior.

"I am come with a letter from my father, Sir Richard Lyons, sir, to Mr. Nicholas Bat."

"Sir Richard Lyons?" said Mr. Bat, inquiringly.

Lachlan blushed. He began to feel that there was something ridiculous in assuming the title.

"My father went to Australia, sir, Mr. Job Lyons's elder brother."

Mr. Bat smiled.

"I remember. We used to call him Dick. He and I were old friends; shake hands, my boy. We must be better acquainted. A letter for me, eh?"

"No, sir, for Mr. Nicholas Bat, from my father."

"Um! that's queer. Is he come with you? Ah! dear me! I am very sorry. Poor fellow! Well, such is life! Here is my saintfoin just coming up to-day, cut down to-morrow. By the way, Kern, tell your father that he was wrong about the saintfoin. See what a crop I have; he ought to sow it. This light chalky soil is the very thing for it. What a fine sight it is in the afternoon sunlight!"

Mr. Bat was right; it was a very beautiful sight, and still more beautiful from a little distance. The field was one bright, flickering, wavering flush of red; and as the sun drew out and enhanced the colour, it looked like the sky at sunset.

Mr. Bat, too, was somewhat remarkable in his appearance. He would not have made a bad picture as he stood, with his retriever at his heels, and Lachlan and Kern before him in the centre of that brilliant field; green downs behind him, a green valley beneath. He was a middle-aged man, tall, portly, grizzled and bronzed. He wore a farmer's costume of fustian jacket, corduroy breeches, immense leather overalls, and coarse straw hat. He carried a hoe in his hand, and looked keenly about him. He was every inch a farmer, and every inch a gentleman.

"What is saintfoin, sir?" asked Lachlan.

"Saintfoin? holy hay. A grass seed that we sow early for an early crop. I never could persuade your uncle to try it. If you like I will give you a treatise upon it to read."

"Thank you, sir."

"Come with me to the house. You are not afraid of three old bachelors, Miss Kern?"

They all went to the Lodge, Kern whispering to Lachlan that she had often longed to see the Bats' nest, but never had been into it before.

Mr. Bat led them into a good library, where they found Mr. Oliver Bat. He was a much younger man than his brother, very pale and thin, with reddish hair and small bright blue eyes. He was dressed with great care, and contrasted widely with Mr. Bat in his farm costume.

"I want that number of the 'Farmer's Magazine' with the treatise on saintfoin in it," said Mr. Bat.

Mr. Oliver went at once to a particular corner of his very neat bookshelves, and produced the particular number.

Then Mr. Bat introduced Lachlan, and Mr. Oliver bowed, and put a chair for Kern, who was standing looking very demure, whilst Lachlan was receiving the book.

"Are you fond of reading?" he asked of Kern.

"Very, Mr. Oliver. I am reading Sir Walter Scott's novels. Miss Eagles has them all, and has lent them to me."

Kern looked inquisitively into Mr. Oliver's face as she said this.

"Ah! is Miss Eagles a reader?"

"Oh yes! she is very clever. She can do everything."

"Now, cousin, if you please, I am ready," said Lachlan.

"You will find my brother down below, fishing in the stream," said Mr. Bat; "and if you want books, I am sure Oliver will lend you some."

"Certainly; or you, Miss Kern. Perhaps Miss Eagles—but never mind—good morning."

Lachlan and Kern hurried down from the Lodge to the bright little stream in the vale, of which the brook already described formed a portion. After walking briskly along its bank for about a quarter of a mile, they saw a gentleman fishing.

"There is Mr. Nick," said Kern. "You see he didn't die of love, like the Bride of Lammermoor. How red and fat he looks!"

In truth Mr. Nicholas Bat was a jolly-looking man. He was much shorter and stouter than either of his brothers, and of redder face. His

short velveteen jacket and broad straw hat did not show off his person to advantage.

"If you please, sir, I have a letter—" began Lachlan.

"Stop—stop a minute. I feel a fish biting," said Mr. Nicholas.

But there was no fish, and he turned round disappointed.

"I beg your pardon, I don't think I know you. You are not a Lyons? How d'ye do, Miss Kern?"

"My father was Mr. Job Lyons's eldest brother, sir, and he sent you this letter from Australia."

Kern was delighted to see a very decided change of countenance. The rosy face became redder.

"Your father! How dare he?"

"He is dead, sir," said Lachlan, simply.

"Poor boy! I beg your pardon."

He took the letter, crumpled it up in his hand, and stuffed it into his pocket.

"You will read it, sir?"

"Not now, not now; I am busy. There is a splendid trout."

Lachlan glanced at the stream, but Kern, on whom nothing was ever lost, saw that the hand which held the long fishing-rod trembled.

"I will see you another day about this. Tell me your name. You are like——"

"My mother, sir, they say. My name is Lachlan."

Mr. Nicholas Bat held out his hand, shook hands with Lachlan, turned, and hurried up the stream.

"Well, that is romantic," said Kern. "I could fancy Mr. Oliver like that, but not Mr. Nicholas. This is the way to grandfather's." And they walked by the sparkling water to the farm.

"Now tell me about your schoolmaster and mistress, cousin," said Lachlan.

"Mr. Eagles is a gentleman, but we don't know much about him. He is very learned and clever, and can teach everything. He came to settle here a great many years ago, and then he had a grown-up son, and a daughter. She was only a young girl then, but I believe she is more than twenty-five now. Mr. Eagles is as proud and cross as he can be, and canes the boys well; but he makes them learn."

"Can he teach mathematics?"

"Of course he can; he can teach everything. And Miss Eagles teaches music and French. I have made mother promise to let me learn music. Miss Eagles has taught me French for nothing."

"Where is the son?"

"I don't know; nobody knows. He went away to learn painting, and has never written to his father since. He was very wild, and a dreadful temper. Father says it was no wonder, for Mr. Eagles spoilt him, and I suppose that is why all our children are such tempers, for father and mother spoil them. I think I have found out that young Mr. Eagles was to have married Aunt Mary, who died last year, and that she pined after him. But I don't believe any one was ever such a fool as to die for love. Do you?"

"I don't know anything about it. But is Mr. Eagles anything of a geologist, or does he understand engineering?"

"I dare say he does; I tell you, cousin, he knows everything; and Miss Eagles is as proud as if she were a duchess. She thinks it quite an honour to come to drink tea with us. And Mat is dreadfully in love with her, and she doesn't care for him. He is eighteen, and she is five-and-twenty, at least. I laugh at him, and he gets so furious."

"But if they are so grand, why do they keep school?"

"That is what everybody says. And they are such tempers! Even Miss Eagles can't help boxing our ears sometimes. Not mine; no, she never boxed mine. Kezia is her great

favourite. I have seen Mr. Oliver Bat look at her and speak to her very often. That is why I said she was so clever, just to see whether he would blush, as they do in the Waverley novels; but I don't think he did."

At this juncture they entered the farmyard at the Downs, where we have already seen, Aline met and left them. When Lachlan had been duly presented to Mrs. Bull, they all went into the house to tea.

Kern told her grandfather, in her gravest and most satirical manner, of Lachlan's reception by his relations, beginning with her own mother. Mr. Bull laughed till he shook the tea-table, and questioned Lachlan on every minute particular of his visits.

"That's right, my boy!" he exclaimed. "Nothing like independence. If doesn't ask for anything, thee'lt be sure to have it. Had'st gone cringing and fawning, the old ladies might 'a had some reason to grumble; now they'll glow at you for a time, and mayhap come round. I woudn't 'a grudged a sovereign to 'a seen the Cap'en when thee hurt his toe. He isn't such a bad man either, but as conceited as a peacock. He writes the country news for the 'Dorset Director,' and he thinks Dr. Johnson's nothing to 'm."

"But the Mr. Bats were much kinder than they were," said Lachlan.

"Ah! they're gentlefolks, born and bred; so are the Daws, but the Cap'en's only half-and-half. Besides, nobody can expect them to do anything for 'ee, so they may ventur to be civil; once your relations take you by the hand, they can't let you go. Why even our Rhod was glad to see you for a week or so, d'ye see. Haw! haw! haw!"

"Oh, grandfather!" said Mrs. Bull. "You mustn't mind my master, my dear. He must have his joke."

"I don't, ma'am," said Lachlan, laughing. "But, sir, I want to show them at once that I can keep myself. What is the best way of earning a living here in England?"

"What sort of a living? Where there's a will there's a way."

"Any sort. I don't care what I put my hand to."

"Bravo, boy! Thee'lt do. Tell your uncle that to-morrow, and shame Mat. And if he don't find 'ee work, I will. What dost like best?"

"I want to be an engineer, but I must make money first."

This was said confidently.

"Whew! You'll want a couple of hundred to get apprenticed."

"I shall do it, somehow. I know more now than many boys did at my age, who became learned men."

Mrs. Bull looked admiringly at Lachlan, and said that was just like Dr. Dove.

Here Mrs. Fluke came into the room, and said that her lady would like to see Lachlan before he went away.

Kern glanced rather contemptuously at Fluke, and was rewarded by a broad stare.

"Another granddaughter I suppose, Mrs. Bull? What's your name, my dear."

"Lyons," said Kern, shortly.

"Ke-ren-hap-puch," said Mr. Bull, pronouncing each syllable slowly, and glancing maliciously at Kern.

"What?" ejaculated Lachlan.

"Job's youngest daughter. Her father, whose name is Job, would have his children called after them of his namesake, the patriarch: Jemima, Kezia, and Ke-ren-hap-puch. When she was christened——"

"I wish you wouldn't tell that old story," said Kern, rising and walking majestically out of the room.

"When she was christened," again began Mr. Bull, without noticing Kern's absence, "her nurse called her Kernpooch,—you see 'tis a hard

name to spell and sound—and so we have called her Kern ever since."

Mrs. Fluke and Lachlan laughed.

"She always goes out of the room when I tell the story, so we are used to it. Now you can come in again, Kern."

Kern waited until Mrs. Fluke was gone, and then re-appeared.

"Such a vulgar woman too!" was all she said.

The parlour tea was later than that of the hall, so Lachlan went out with Mr. Bull, whilst Kern, rather reluctantly, washed up the tea-things at her grandmother's request.

In due course of time, Lachlan paid his visit. He found Madam Rambully—so we must now call her, as she was ever afterwards known by that name—with her bonnet and veil on, and wondered that she was going out so late; she held out her hand to him, and said Fluke had been telling her his history, and she wanted to know if he were really a baronet.

Lachlan was disappointed when he found it was curiosity and not interest that induced Madam Rambully to send for him. However, Aline put her little hand in his, and told him that her mamma was sorry for him, because he had come alone and so far, to strangers; and so he was comforted, and told his story

"Ah! the baronetcy was very remote," said Madam Rambully; "there is not much chance of your ever regaining it. I suppose you found your relations low people."

"By no means, madam," said Lachlan; "they are all very respectable."

"And kind?" asked Aline.

"Some of them," said Lachlan.

"You will be always kind to the poor boy, mamma, won't you?" said Aline. "I am sure I will. May I go and speak to the girl that came with him, mamma? She is very pretty."

"Yes, if you like. But don't stay."

Aline accompanied Lachlan into the hall. She at once tried to make friends with Kern, who was very polite and dignified. She felt offended that she, too, had not been invited into the parlour.

Fluke arrived with her usual, "Your mamma wants you, Miss Aline," and Aline hurried off.

"I can't think who you take after, Miss," said Fluke. "You pick up with everybody. You are 'ail fellow well met with all this 'ouse already."

"You are so cross, Fluke. Why shouldn't I talk to that pretty girl?"

"Because she isn't fit company for you, Miss Aline. I don't like her. She give herself airs."

"Yes, I think she is rather grand," said Aline, thoughtfully, but when she re-entered the parlour, she described Kern as "the most beautiful girl she had ever seen in her life;" and upon Fluke's telling the story of her christening, declared that her long eastern name was just fit for her, for she was like a princess.

"Law, Miss Aline, what notions you 'ave. Where do you pick them up?"

"For shame, Fluke. You don't know the history of Job. You know he was the greatest man in all the East. The Bible says so. And his daughters must have been princesses; and they were all very beautiful. Mamma, make Fluke sit down, and I will read it to her."

"Law, Miss Aline! What a child you are! I've read it hundreds of times, but I never found that out."

"Then you must."

So Fluke was compelled to sit down and listen to the book of Job, during the reading of which Madam Rambully went to sleep; but Fluke was kept effectually awake by Aline's perpetual repetition of "Do you see, Fluke? do you understand?"

To the child the story was that of a beautiful poem, out of which her fancy conjured up a thousand images, almost as pure, perhaps, as those of the poet who wrote it.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

The next morning Lachlan and Kern stood together at the gate of the garden that opened into the churchyard, to watch the funeral procession that accompanied the remains of Mrs. Raven to the grave. The elders of the family, together with the heads of all the houses in the parish, were amongst the sorrowing friends who followed that simple coffin: the younger were in the churchyard looking on. Somehow this pair could not join the crowd.

When Lachlan saw Mr. Raven, his sister, and four little children, standing round the grave, and seemed to hear the repressed sobs of these mourners, he turned away, and went quietly into the house. Here he sat down and cried. Strangers they all were to him, but his heart was open to sympathy.

Kezia, who had remained in the house to nurse

the twins, came into the hall to put one of them into his cradle. Seeing Lachlan, she sat down beside him, and cried with him. From that moment they understood one another.

Kern returned in due course of time. There were no traces of tears on her handsome face, but it was very grave.

She began at once to describe the funeral to Kezia.

One after another the rest of the family came in.

"Who knows whose turn it may be next!" said Mrs. Lyons, with her handkerchief to her eyes. "Yes: mine, girls, perhaps. I'm not so strong as she was, dear soul. You'll know how to value me, perhaps, when I'm gone. 'Twas a pitiful sight! I was thinking of Luke and John and Rhoda, and the blessed twins, all the time, and wondering who'd take care of 'em if I was gone. I don't feel as if I should be here many years."

"Lor, mother, how you do talk!" said Jemima, "What's the use?"

Rhoda and John began to roar.

"There, my little angels, don't cry for mother," said Mrs. Lyons, looking as if she really was about to be buried; "but one can't help thinking when one is so weak; and I must say,

Jemima, you're very unfeeling. I suppose you take after your father: 'tis in his family, not in ours, for there never were more feeling people than father and mother. But we can't be all alike in this world."

"That's a blessing, at any rate," said Mr. Lyons. "But I think we needn't begin to grumble and bemoan ourselves the minute we come home from such a sight as we've just seen. Parson Raven set us a better example than that. And after all there isn't so much to wish to live for that I see. 'Tis but a weary world, all work and no play; and those who are most useful in it always seem to go first."

"Perhaps they are most ready, father," said Kezia, gently.

"Ah! that's what Mrs. Raven taught you," sighed Mrs. Lyons. "We sha'n't have anybody like her again. But I can't see what you should find so hard in life, Job. It's very unkind to hurt one's feelings so. You, with good health, and me, and ten little angels——"

"We needn't quarrel about it now," said Mr. Lyons. "Ah! there's Mr. Eagles with Mat. Now that is an unexpected pleasure."

"Let's be off," cried Mark and Luke, disappearing at one door as Mr. Eagles and Mat entered at another.

"Your son insisted upon my coming in, Mrs. Lyons," he said. "I was going straight home, but he wouldn't let me off. I hope I am not disturbing you?"

"Not at all, sir. I'm sure we're always glad to see you. But you'll excuse our being rather put about to-day and flurried by this sad scene. I was just saying that we didn't know who would be next. Perhaps I, who am always ill, may be taken off."

"Perhaps so, ma'am," said Mr. Eagles, absently, and looking at Lachlan as he spoke. "I suppose this is the nephew from Australia?"

Lachlan at once went towards Mr. Eagles, who shook hands with him, and fixed a pair of brisk, inquisitive black eyes upon his face.

Mr. Eagles was a little, bald, grey-headed, elderly man, with a keen, sensible, but somewhat stern expression of countenance. You could believe, at the first sight of him, Kern's assertion that he caned his scholars.

Jacob and Esau began to cry simultaneously, and Mrs. Lyons forgot her approaching demise in her little angels, and in sending off Jemima and Kezia to see about dinner. Mr. Lyons meanwhile took Mr. Eagles into the parlour for "a little quiet," as he expressed it, whither Mat and Lachlan followed.

Mr. Eagles soon began to talk to Lachlan about Australia, and the quartette were shortly engaged in discussing the merits of emigration, towards which Mr. Eagles, as well as Mat, rather inclined. Were he a few years younger, he said, he would go to Australia at once, upon which Mat declared his resolution of doing so as soon as he could manage it.

"And what are you going to do, my lad?" said Mr. Eagles to Lachlan.

"Work for my uncle, sir, if he will let me," was the boy's ready answer.

He had quite made up his mind what to say on the first opportunity, during the past night, which had been but a restless and sleepless one.

"How?" said Mr. Lyons.

"I want to earn my living, uncle, and I think I could be worth board and lodging now, if you would try me. I know something of farm-work."

"He could take my place," said Mat.

"And the learning?" asked Mr Eagles. "You have an eye for a scholar?"

"I could learn after work-hours. Many have done that, sir."

"What is your taste?"

"I want to learn mathematics, sir, and engineering, and geology, and drawing, and—— "

"And all after what o'clock, Mr. Lyons?" said Mr. Eagles, smiling.

"Seven or eight, maybe," laughed Mr. Lyons.

"Let him off at seven, and he can come to my night-class," said Mr. Eagles. "But how do you mean to pay for your schooling, my boy?"

Lachlan's countenance fell.

"I dare say I can earn something. I used in Australia. Work and money come together. And if my cousins will lend me their books, I can teach myself. And Mr. Bat promised to lend me books, and I am sure I can get on."

Mr. Eagles was interested. He was a scholar, and fond of teaching; but he had never, in his experience, had to do with a boy who was resolved to educate himself, and would not, to all appearance, need the cane. His pupils were principally the sons of respectable farmers, who seldom went beyond a certain point, or displayed beyond the average amount of ability; and even those who did were removed from him generally too early to enable him to perfect their education.

He put Lachlan a few of the ordinary questions in mental arithmetic, and received such ready answers that he was surprised, and so were Mr. Lyons and Mat, neither of whom could have answered them. With true scholastic zeal

he went on questioning, and Lachlan went on replying, until dinner was ready.

He found that the boy had a mathematical turn, which, though uncultivated save by his own acute observation and perseverance, was already surprisingly developed.

After dinner he managed to speak in private to Mr. Lyons about him, and said that it would be a sin to allow his powers to sleep.

"Not that they can sleep, Mr. Lyons," he said, "but they ought to be cultivated."

"You must talk to my wife, Mr. Eagles. I think you'll find that she'll say ten children are quite enough for us to cultivate."

"But you don't mean to send the boy adrift. Let him work as he proposed, at least, and give him his evenings."

"I've no objection; but Rhoda thinks he's only come for a visit. I can't afford to keep the boy, and send him to school, and that's the truth."

"I wouldn't advise that. I know, to my cost, what trying to educate a genius is. Let him fight his own battle; but give him a chance of learning."

"I don't care, but you must talk to my wife. What with the farm, and the ten children, and her health, and the bad times, and fifty other

things, I am almost beside myself; and now here's another plague come upon one in poor Dick's boy. Talk of the plagues of Egypt, why, Mr. Eagles, they were nothing to it. I was well christened Job, I'm sure, only I wish I had some of his patience."

Mr. Eagles bustled off to find Mrs. Lyons. She was superintending a general scouring of milk-pails and tins, with Esau in her arms; whilst Jemima was audibly grumbling that she could do the work fifty times as well if mother would only take away that roaring baby. The servant-girl looked cross, and the trio was evidently not a happy one.

Mr. Eagles poked his nose into the dairy from without, and said: "One word, if you please, Mrs. Lyons, before I go."

"Directly, Mr. Eagles. Now, Jemima, do get it done up before milking-time. It wears one's life out to be so troubled."

"Thank goodness!" said Jemima, as her mother went away. "Now, Molly, let's set to work our own way. I wish I was married."

"Zure, Miss Mima, there be young Measter Low as be a dyin' vor 'ee. I heerd 'im zay t'other day az you wur the vlower o' the vlock, and hur didn't think Miss Kern could light a candle to 'ee."

"Now, Molly, work away, and let's adone before mother comes back," said Jemima, blushing visibly.

Mr. Eagles had the tact to begin his conversation with Mrs. Lyons by praising Mark and Luke, and saying how well Matthew was turning out.

"But, Mr. Eagles, Mat declares he'll go to Australia; and if he does, it'll be the death of me. You said yourself just now, sir, that you thought it likely I should be taken next to poor dear Mrs. Raven——"

"I, ma'am! You mistake. I never thought——"

"Oh, yes! Mr. Eagles, it slipped out, but you know it's quite true."

"A few years in a new country might make a man and a fortune of a fine fellow like Matthew, Mrs. Lyons. Some of your family must emigrate. What are you to do with them all here? Besides, there's a clever young nephew come to take his place."

Mrs. Lyons began to cry, and as she was wiping her eyes, Matthew and Lachlan came in. They had been continuing the conversation begun in the parlour in the fields, and Mat had come to the resolution that go to Australia he would to seek his fortune.

He entered at once eagerly into the discussion of the elders, but Mrs. Lyons continued firm to her resolution that Matthew should not go away. As to Lachlan, he seemed a kind lad, and he might remain for a few weeks, if he liked, until they saw what would turn up for him, but they couldn't afford to pay for his schooling.

Mr. Eagles said that he was sure Lachlan would manage to earn money enough to pay him for his night class, resolving in his mind the while not to take anything for teaching him, but wishing to keep him up to his independence. Lachlan thanked his aunt very heartily, told Mr. Eagles that as soon as he had anything to pay he would attend school, and that meanwhile he would teach himself. Mr. Eagles said that he had better come at once, just to be set going, and that they would not quarrel about the payment for the first week.

Accordingly, the following morning saw Lachlan working with a will in the fields with his uncle and cousin, and the evening found him, heart and soul, in mathematics at Mr. Eagles' evening class.

Scholastics were also in question at the Downs Farm. Fluke having quite made up her mind that her mistress was very well placed in her present lodging, determined that she should re-

main there. But what was to become of Aline? She must be taught, and her mother was nearly blind, and Fluke was ignorant.

She was not very long in finding out from Mrs. Bull that there was a lady a little out of the village who gave lessons to any one who would receive them, but that there were few to learn. Mrs. Bull believed she was very clever, and knew that she was highly educated. Her granddaughters had been taught by her, but, with the exception of Kern, they had only had quite a plain education. Kern was ambitious, and her father spoilt her, so she was to learn music, she was told, which she thought quite out of place. She had no idea of girls getting notions beyond their situation in life.

"Does the lady go out to teach?" asked Fluke.

"She is very particular," was the reply. "She goes to Miss Love, and to little Miss Raven, poor dear, for music; but all the rest go to her. I mean Kern and one or two others, and Kezia when she can."

"Do you think she would come to Miss Aline, just whilst we're here, ma'am?"

"Well, I really don't know. It is rather far."

Mrs. Bull hesitated: she felt sure Miss Eagles would go nowhere if there were any doubt as to the respectability of her pupils.

The first Sunday that they were at the Downs Mrs. Bull did not go to church in the afternoon, and offered to wait upon Madam Rambully, if Fluke would take Aline. The child begged so hard that the mother insisted, and Fluke consented.

They walked with Mr. Bull across the meadows, Aline prattling all the way like the brook that babbled near them. She could not restrain her delight when the church bells rang out their cheerful call to prayers, but bounded away from her companions, as if to meet the chime, like a frisky lamb from its mother.

"Bless her innocent, little heart!" said Mr. Bull. "I hope it may always be as light whilst it is with us."

It was more than half a mile from the Downs Farm to the church. The congregation were flocking in as our trio reached it. Fluke saw and inwardly commented on every one; Aline walked through the churchyard demurely with her little hand in Mr. Bull's, and did not look much about her. The child felt quieted by the quiet churchyard. She just glanced at Church Farm, and saw Lachlan and his relations coming through the garden gate.

She wondered sadly whether Mrs. Raven's poor little children were at church, and had

she asked Fluke she could have told her. She saw them, their father, and aunt behind the curtains of the large vicarage pew She saw the Miss Daws in their grand pew, the Loves and the Lyonses in theirs; she saw the three Mr. Bats, Mr. Perch the doctor, and Mr. and Miss Eagles.

"Aren't those two in the small pew to the right the schoolmaster and his daughter?" she asked of Mr. Bull as they sat down.

He nodded assent, and she was satisfied. Miss Eagles was certainly a lady. Having settled this in her mind she attended, reverently enough, to the service.

After it was over she resisted Aline's entreaties to be allowed to speak to Lachlan and Kern, and returned to the Downs alone with her. Mr. Bull always went to his son-in-law's after church.

Lachlan was looking eagerly after Fluke and Aline, as were more than half of the congregation, when he heard a low, hasty "How do you do?" at his side. He turned to speak to Miss Harriet Daw, who nodded to him, and hurried on after her two large-bonneted and erect sisters. The trio walked home from church with the Loves and the doctor, and it was finally settled that Madam Rambully was not to be called upon, that

Lachlan Lyons was an impertinent, forward boy, that it was too soon for the Ravens to be at church, and that Kern Lyons was the most conceited girl in the country, and would inevitably be ruined if her parents did not take care.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SCHOOLMISTRESS.

Mrs. Bull relented from her resolution that her lodgers should leave at the end of the prescribed two months, although people talked of them, and of her and Mr. Bull for allowing them to remain in her house. She even began to hope that they would not propose it themselves.

Of Madam Rambully she saw very little. She gave no trouble to any one but Fluke, whose pleasure it was to do everything for her and Aline. She found Mrs. Fluke a good-natured, obliging woman, and an amusing companion, and by degrees ceased to remember that she never had any parents. As to Aline, she soon became quite as fond of her as of her own grandchildren, and Mr. Bull was, if possible, still fonder. The child took to calling them granny and daddy, and was quite happy when allowed to be with them and Wolf, Jack, and Tom. Fluke paid for every-

thing they wanted liberally, and there seemed to be no lack of money.

If there was any complaint to be made, it was that Fluke kept Aline in the parlour whenever any of the Lyons' children came to the Downs, and would not let her associate with them. "It was too ridiculous," Mrs. Bull said, "that the maid should be grander than her mistress." But so it was. Many things to which Madam Rambully would have been indifferent Fluke was very obstinate about.

Meanwhile Aline enjoyed life thoroughly. She continued the wanderings she had begun the first day of her arrival at the farm, and whilst her mother dozed away her afternoon, she, the old dog, and the jackdaw were to be seen together out of doors. By degrees she made acquaintance with the cows, pigs, and poultry, helped Mr. Bull to feed the horses, Joan to milk the cows, John Dull and Wolf to run after the sheep; in short, became a child of the farm, in every sense of the word.

She made hay all the haymaking time, and rode about in the waggons; she ferretted out fresh eggs for her mother in the hayloft; she brought her milk fresh from the cow every afternoon at milking-time; and finally collected matter every day to amuse her in her solitary blindness.

With much persuasion she induced her to go and sit in the morning in her bower of honeysuckles and lilies, and in the early, hot, summer evenings under the shade of the tall elms near the chapel, by the brook; or she guided her steps gently up the Downs in the cool of the day, seated her on the short turfy grass, and read or talked to her, whilst the breezes played around them, and the sun sank majestically behind the opposite hills.

Here, once or twice, Lachlan stumbled upon them, when, book in hand, he sought the Downs for solitude and study after a hard day's work in the fields. Aline brought him to her mother, and made him sit down beside her, and tell her of Australia and its many-coloured birds, its wonderful productions, its natives, and its settlers.

Out of Lachlan's realities, and the idealities of her many fairy tale-books, Aline wrought wonderful romances, and peopled an imaginary world with creatures born from her fruitful fancy, and nurtured by her glowing mind.

After maturing her plans, Fluke broached the subject of Aline's education to her mistress. At first Madam Rambully declared that the child learnt of her own accord, and would know quite as much as she wanted, but by degrees she began to see that more might be necessary. Fluke

mentioned Miss Eagles, and finally had her way. Aline strongly objected at first, and told Fluke that nothing should induce her to give up her out-of-door lessons for indoor ones; but when her mother said they would not begin until the approach of winter, she yielded.

The upshot of it all was, that one fine afternoon in the beginning of September saw Miss Eagles at the farm. Madam Rambully was asleep, and Aline was out of doors. Fluke went to Miss Eagles in the hall: she curtseyed to her as she came in, apologized for the absence of her mistress, and began the scholastic subject at once. "Could Miss Eagles give Miss Rambully a few hours' instruction daily?"

"I should prefer communicating with Madam Rambully on the subject," was Miss Eagles' somewhat haughty answer.

Fluke fired up.

"I am in the 'abit of transacting all my lady's business, ma'am. You are aware she is blind?"

"That need not prevent her speaking to me. I shall not intrude. I will wait."

Fluke looked at Miss Eagles. She had hitherto only seen her at a distance. She was in the presence of a lady even more resolute than herself, of that she felt sure, and she hoped that she would be able to manage Aline.

"I will speak to my mistress, ma'am, but she seldom sees strangers."

Fluke disappeared.

Miss Eagles was a handsome young woman, of middle height, lady-like appearance, and rather forbidding manners. Quick black eyes looked out from beneath a pair of black eyebrows that nearly met above the nose, and gave a somewhat fierce expression to a face that was otherwise essentially feminine. She was of very dark complexion, and through its clear brown the warm blood was for ever flushing, and giving a glow to the cheeks like the last red flickerings of the sun above the horizon at twilight. This, and an occasional firm setting of the lips, as if the teeth suddenly clenched, again proved that Kern was not far wrong in her estimate of this lady's temper.

Mrs. Bull came into the hall. Miss Eagles kissed her with some degree of warmth, but the salute was not returned as warmly.

"You have never been here since ——" said Mrs. Bull, bursting into tears.

"I could not," was the brief reply.

Fluke returned.

"My mistress will see you, Miss Eagles: but she is very nervous, and perhaps you will be careful of what you say to her."

"I shall say nothing but what is absolutely necessary."

Madam Rambully had put on her bonnet, goggles, and blue veil; she bowed as Miss Eagles entered, and murmured some sort of salutation. Then there was a perfect silence, broken at last by Miss Eagles.

"You wish me to teach your daughter, madam?"

"We have been thinking of it, if it can be accomplished. But I am an invalid, and cannot bear any excitement; and Aline has had her own way, and I am afraid she will not like it."

"I could come every day from twelve till two. My terms would be one shilling an hour."

"That is rather——"

"If you think it too much, I could come for twenty pounds a year, deducting the usual holidays at Midsummer and Easter."

"I thought it too little,—not too much."

"Thank you; I should be satisfied."

"You teach——"

"Whatever your child likes to learn; I profess to teach everything."

"Everything?"

"Yes; from Greek and Latin down to marking samplers."

This was said with one of the quick flushes,

and in a tone that told on Madam Rambully.

Miss Eagles had a very flexible, well-modulated voice in speaking.

Just at this juncture Aline came in. She started back on seeing Miss Eagles, who made her a forbidding little nod. But Aline came forward, curtseyed, and said, "How do you do, ma'am," just as Fluke had been tutoring her to do, previously.

"You know Miss Eagles, Aline?" said her mother.

"I have seen her at church, mamma."

"Will you try to learn of her? She is kind enough to say she will teach you."

"If you wish it. But I know I shall not like sitting down to lessons. I can't learn grammar and five-syllable spelling with meanings, and do great long sums, and all those things Fluke talks of; indeed I cannot, Miss Eagles."

Miss Eagles shot a quick glance at the child.

"You would like long sums if you were taught the right way. Kern Lyons likes them."

"She looks very clever."

"She is clever."

"Who is that?" asked Madam Rambully.

"Mrs. Bull's granddaughter, mamma; the

pretty girl I told you of. I should like to learn with her."

"Do you teach her, Miss Eagles?" asked Madam Rambully.

"A little, occasionally. She is very anxious to learn."

"Could she come here and learn with Aline, do you think? It would be good for both, perhaps."

"Very," said Miss Eagles. "If you really wish it, I am sure I could manage it."

"How cross Fluke will be!" said Aline.

"You can come when you like, Miss Eagles—at your own time, and on your own terms," said Madam Rambully.

"On Monday, then, if you please,—at twelve o'clock. Good morning."

Miss Eagles nodded to Aline, and left the room. Fluke met her in the passage, but she did not stop to speak to her. She went out quickly by the back door into the garden, and up the Downs. As she ascended the hill, she drew a long breath, and said, "It is something to have to do with a gentlewoman: but the child is slow. I think Kern will have her heart's desire, if this can be arranged."

At the top of the Downs she stopped, and drew another long breath, then looked down upon the calm farm-house.

"The air of that place stifles me," she said. "It will be the climax to go there and teach daily. I shall see her in every corner, hear her in every breath. Dear, sweet, gentle Mary! You and Mrs. Raven, the only true women in the world, and both gone! Oh, brother! brother! why were you sent here to cause so much grief?"

"Miss Eagles!" said a voice from behind her.

It was Matthew Lyons.

She started, and the black eyebrows met.

"I have been waiting for you. I saw you come across the Down, and was determined to see you once more before I go away. Not that you care whether I go or stay,—and yet it is on your account. I'm sure I don't mind whether I make my fortune or not; what is it to me, when you won't have anything to say to me?"

"Matthew,—I thought we had finished this foolish affair long ago. Why will you fancy yourself a man, when you are still a boy?"

"A boy! I shall be nineteen next Christmas!"

"Matthew,—listen to me for the last time. I am nearly ten years older than you,—and were that the only objection, it would be insuperable with me; but there are fifty others, which you know as well as I do, therefore, why do you

torment me? Have I not enough worry without this?"

"I can't help it, Miss Eagles; I love you so! I am going away from you, but I shall carry the pain wherever I go; and if mother dies of a broken heart—as she says she shall—it will be your fault. But you are too proud to take a farmer's son, though we are of good family, and I don't see but a farmer's as good as a schoolmaster, any day!"

"Very likely; so, good-bye, Matthew, if you are determined to go to Australia."

"Mayn't I walk home with you this once? Oh! to think there should be a woman in the world so hard-hearted!"

"No;—good-bye! You will soon forget me for some younger, and prettier, and happier girl. I thank you for your love. Good-bye!"

They were at the gate leading from the Downs into the road. Miss Eagles walked hastily up the hill, away from the village, and Matthew stood looking after her, and declaring that he would go and hang himself.

In less than ten minutes she arrived at a little green lane, up which she turned, and then at a small green gate that opened into a garden. Here she and her father lived.

Their habitation was a small thatched cottage,

containing five or six rooms. It was said to have been originally a lodge to the old manor house, and had a stone porch behind, which was all that remained of its antiquity. Now a rustic verandah was thrown all round it, which was laden with every kind of creeping plant. About the four latticed windows in front were abundance of roses and honeysuckles, and in the window-seats within were many choice hot-house flowers. As you stood in the little garden, the perfume of flowers, the hum of bees, the buzz of flies, the songs of birds, the nameless and unseen mysteries of the summer atmosphere, all combined to delight the senses, and no one would believe that the struggles of poverty could ever be known within such an elysium. The eye rested on nothing but the various greens of the varied foliage, and the bright colours of many-hued flowers: the mind thought of the taste and poetry of the individuals who could have transformed a common cottage home and cottage garden into such an earthly paradise.

Even the schoolroom did not interfere, to show that other cultivation than that of nature went on here. It was situated at the back of the house, quite apart from it, having been once another cottage.

The inside was in keeping with the outside.

Of the two front rooms, one was a carpeted parlour, the other a matted hall. The walls of the former were covered with every kind of water-colour drawing and oil painting; of the latter with light-green bookshelves filled with books. The furniture was of the simplest kind, manufactured, principally, by Mr. Eagles himself; but so tastefully painted in light-green and white, that a stranger would ask whence the elegant articles came. Such little drapery as there was, up-stairs and down, was white; and through the small open windows, each with its half lattice protruding outwards, floated clear muslin curtains, touching the clematis and roses.

Miss Eagles ran up-stairs, and threw her bonnet on her neat little bed. She was more remarkable without her bonnet than with it —her black hair drawn, in the Madonna style, across her somewhat low forehead, and twisted like a coiled snake round the back of her head. It was a head in which a phrenologist would have rejoiced,—well shaped, well set on the thin neck, and the masses of hair so smooth that the hand longed to touch it.

She did not stop to look in the glass, but was in the parlour, and by her father's side, in a few seconds.

He was seated at a desk, writing. She put

her hand on his bald head and kissed his forehead.

"Ellen! Light of my eyes," he said, looking up.

As those two pairs of black, bright, piercing eyes met, they might have been indeed the eyes of real eagles, as they were those of nominal ones.

"I will get tea, and then I will tell you all," said Ellen.

On the green and white table-cloth was laid out a green and white tea-service.

The boys used to sing the rhyme—

> "Green and white,
> Love forsaken quite,"

and call her "The Forsaken," because she was so fond of the union of these two colours. She liked them because they reminded her of lilies in their leaves. And yet to look at her darkling brows, and painfully fixed lips, you would not have thought her romantic or sentimental.

She went into her small, neat kitchen, where a tidy girl was intently watching the tea-kettle.

"Does the kettle boil, Jenny?" she asked.

"A'moast, Miss. Her a been a bwoiling, an' I took her off, and now her be as obstinate as a pig, and won't bwoil no hows."

"It was all you had to do, Jenny, and my father wants his tea."

"Zay zo, Miss. I cleaned up, and went to pwost."

"Any letter?"

"No, Miss."

A shade of disappointment passed over Miss Eagles' face.

She prepared tea, aided by Jenny and her father, and she looked happy enough as they sat down together.

"A tea dinner," said Mr. Eagles. "I like it. It saves time. Cold meat, eggs, strawberries,—you think of everything, my child. Bless you—and bless Him also, the Giver of all good."

Mr. Eagles stood up and reverently said grace.

"And now for your visit?"

"A sickly, lackadaisical, fine lady; but blind,—so we must be pitiful, I suppose. Everybody excuses everything, except *not* giving in and maundering over one's troubles. That is called insensibility. A child with a singular face and manner, eyes so large that they denote either water on the brain or extreme innocence: not clever, I should say. A shrewd servant, who would have been amusing, I am sure, if one had let her. This Madam Rambully is a gentlewoman in spite of her name. Good manners,

and what is better, a ladylike mind. She thought my modest shilling an hour too little, and did not try to beat me down to sixpence. Neither did she propose sending any of the produce of Mr. Bull's farm in payment."

"Well, love. After all it is not a custom to be despised. These eggs were in return for the multiplication table, boxed into the ears of Simon Slow. I caned this piece of ham out of Sam Fleece; and as to milk, it comes daily, for a daily tugging at poor little Billy Flower's dense brains. The very bread is made from wheat, grown from seed, sown in the somewhat stony ground of Squire Low. Then what butter we get out of those roaring young Lyons, Mark and Luke!"

"I am glad you can jest upon it, father; but it is odious to me. I am to go from twelve to two, so I shall take the poor Vicarage on my way, if I am to continue the music lessons now *she* is gone. Miss Love twice a week as I return, and the other children here, as usual, in the afternoon We will dine at five, and then—oh! I forgot. That evening class of yours! It spoils our little pleasure, father."

"It does some good, Ellen, and gives us a few pence and potatoes."

"I wish you wouldn't jest in that grim way. It is like a flower in a skull."

"Well that a flower can grow anywhere, my sunshine. You are my flower, always bright to my eyes. And Mrs. Bull? What of her?"

It was now the turn of Mr. Eagles' black and grey eyebrows to meet.

"Kind as ever. And I fell in with Mr. Bat, who asked for you, and promised to send you some prime seed of some kind or other, and me a new geranium."

"Have you seen Mr. Oliver lately? He never comes here now."

"No. He is more supercilious, reserved, and distant than ever. Once a friend, always a friend, is my motto. '*Je ne change qu'en mourant.*' A capricious man is not worthy of the name of man. Is not that young Lachlan Lyons? There is some strength of will and purpose in him. I like the boy."

"He is a mathematical genius, and beats me already. Self-taught, and with his own odd means and rules in his brain, he arrives at calculations and theories that it would take me time to work out. Teaching would be pleasant work if all pupils were like him."

"And like Kern Lyons. It seems a pity they are not both well educated."

"They will teach themselves, I dare say."

CHAPTER X.

LACHLAN KNIGHTED.

Mr. Eagles's evening class consisted principally of young men whose daily occupations prevented them from improving themselves, and who gave up an hour of an evening to that object. Lachlan was early on that particular day, and Mr. Eagles joined him before his usual time.

"What of the museum?" he asked.

"My uncle has given me the use of the old loft I told you of, sir, and my cousin Kern is helping me to arrange the specimens."

"And the boxes you left at Southampton?"

"Uncle says they may come here, together with the birds and dogs."

"Very good. When you have arranged them and classified them as well as you can, we will see about the lectures. All the young men in the neighbourhood are wild to hear what you can

say about Australia, and you may as well try to tell it to them all at once as by scraps, when they can get hold of you. You may earn a trifle in this way. Those articles in the 'Dorset Director,' written, they say, by Captain Love, are simply absurd, because he knows nothing of his subject. They will only lead people astray. You can give your own experience."

"But I am too young, sir. I should not have courage. And I am not a ready speaker."

"Yes, you are. Besides, you have nothing to do but to say what you know of the country, the inhabitants, the great fossil remains, the strata, the animals, birds, &c. You have fossils, feathers, nests, curiosities enough to illustrate what you say, and even some live animals to amuse the young people. You must think it all over, when I know not."

"Oh, that is the easiest part. I do that whilst at my field-work."

"Bravo! And how are you to pay the carriage?"

"Out of a sovereign Miss Harriet Daw gave me when I met her on the Downs."

"Good. You have paid me half of that already. The lectures will buy you books, mathematical instruments, and perhaps a new coat."

"I don't mind the coat, sir, except for Sundays, and when I come here or go to the Downs."

"And how do you get on with the boys?"

"Pretty well. They bother me as much as they can. Ever since young Love has been at home—Bullying Bob, as they call him—he sets them on, I think. But I put on a bold face, and give them as good as they give me in my fashion."

"And what is that?"

"Oh! sometimes a joke, and sometimes a keen word. But it all came from my folly about the baronetcy. They all call me Sir Lackland."

"Ah! ah! not so bad. But you must bear that and a great deal more, if you mean to get on in life. And the village magnates?"

"Never look at me. Mr. Bat asked me to go and see him, but I have not had time; and Mr. Raven spoke to me on Sunday, when I went with Cousin Kezia to the school. Two of my Aunt Daws walk past me as if I was a savage, and Miss Love turns up her nose and shakes her curls. I don't admire her, so I don't mind."

"Oh! that's the reason. And the problem?"

"I was up till two this morning, and then my candle went out, and I was obliged to go to bed. I bought a halfpenny candle, and it is done."

"But not the problem? Let's see."

Mr. Eagles and Lachlan were deep in Euclid when the other young men came, and the class began.

There was one of them who particularly excited Mr. Eagles' ire. His name was Low. There was no doubt that he was rather dull. Lachlan had an interest in him, nevertheless, because he was a lover of his cousin Jemima, and he had heard that as soon as he could do the rule of three, had learnt the parts of speech, the capitals of the countries of Europe, and the names of the twelve patriarchs, she would have him. He was now working hard to achieve this great end.

Everybody laughed at him, except Lachlan, who had done his best to help him, and taught himself the three last accomplishments, in teaching him. The twelve patriarchs had been easily managed, because there were various boys in the country named after them, whom Lachlan strung together for his purpose. They had got over the parts of speech by means of their initial letter, a nap vap ci; but beyond England, chief town London; and Turkey, chief town Constantinople, they had not yet proceeded in the capital cities. As to the rule of three that was still more hopeless.

Mr. Eagles flung "The Tutor" down on the table in a passion every evening; for every

evening Mr. Low would say "Multiply the first and second figures together, and—" when Lachlan would give him a tug, and he would change it into "Divide the second and third figures together, and multiply the product by the first."

"Well, Low," began Mr. Eagles, "have you got over Europe yet?"

"Yes, sir."

"Russia? What's the capital of Russia?"

"St. Petersburg."

"Very good. France?" "Paris." "Holland?" "Athens."

This was always a stumbling-block. Amsterdam and Athens, and Berlin and Bergen, were mixed up in his mind.

"Not Athens!" thundered Mr. Eagles.

"To be sure, sir. No, 'tis that other A that ends in 'colt.'"

"Amsterdam, dolt!" said Mr. Eagles.

"Prussia?"

"St. Petersburg."

"No; that's Russia."

"To be sure, sir. I meant Prussia; chief town Russia."

Mr. Eagles threw down the book.

"You must try those again. Now see if you have managed the patriarchs."

He always shut his eyes when he went through

this portion of his task; because, as he told Lachlan, he could fancy all the namesakes of the patriarchs better with his eyes shut. He went through them at full gallop, without a single pause, until he came to the eleventh name; when, as if by some evil influence, he said "Jemima," instead of "Joseph." This was too much, even for Mr. Eagles, who joined in the general laugh. Low laughed as heartily as the rest, and blushed, saying—

"Well, sir, 'tis those capitals that puzzle me. They're all A's and P's, and J's, over and over again. Dang me if I'll try any more."

"Faint heart never won fair lady," said Mr. Eagles. "That would have been very well, but for the young lady, and she is so good-looking that I don't wonder she was more in your mind than the others. Now, for the rule of three."

Thanks to the joke about Jemima, Mr. Eagles was not quite so irascible over the rule of three as he had been for several previous evenings; and when the class broke up, he told young Low that he really thought he would soon be able to claim his bride. Mr. Eagles had been let into the secret from the first, because not one word would Low learn beyond those absolutely necessary for his purpose; and Mr. Eagles wished to impart some more useful information.

Low followed Lachlan to the Downs, discussing the chances in his favour for a speedy union.

"You see, I'm very much obliged to you, Lachlan," he said; "because I should never have learnt 'em but for you. I come up here with my books, and try to fancy all the houses I see one o' them furreign countries—just as you told me: and then, when I've got as far as Switzerland, chief town Berne, I can't help looking down at the Manor, and thinking how my heart burns for Mima, and wondering what on earth put it into her head to make such a fool o' me. I shall always call the Manor, Zwitzerland, and the chimley Burn, as long as I live."

Low was so wrapped up in his subject, and Lachlan was so intent on finding an excuse for getting rid of him, that they had taken no notice of a large party of boys, who had assembled, as they usually did of an evening, for games of ball and cricket. They were not, however, unnoticed by the boys, or by a young man, who was apparently playing with them. Suddenly the cricket-ball rolled close to Lachlan and Low, and there was a general rush of all the party after it. The young man who was foremost stumbled violently against Lachlan and knocked him down; and before he could get up, gave him a smart blow on

the shoulder with what appeared to be a sword, and exclaimed—

"Arise! Sir 'Loin.'"

There was a roar of laughter, and a general shout of the village children and farmers' sons, of "Arise! Sir Loin."

Mark and Luke were amongst them, and shouted lustily.

Lachlan was not long in obeying the command. He rose, and glared round him for a moment. He was in a passion, and no wonder. He marked his enemy; and before he could have counted five, Master Robert Love was rolling on the turf. It was he who had upset him.

As it chanced, they were on the brow of the hill, and the young gentleman continued his ignoble journey down it, until he was caught in a furze-bush.

Low turned to look for Lachlan, who had watched the descent of his enemy with some consternation, and was waiting to see whether he would get out of the furze-bush. Low saw Mark and Luke slinking home, and caught them each by an arm; and in spite of vigorous struggling, hauled them towards Lachlan.

"Now, young chaps, beg your cousin's pardon, directly," he said; "if you don't, I'll take 'ee to your vather, and tell him all about it."

"Don't be a fool, George," roared Mark.

"Be hanged if I do," cried Luke.

"Then I'll roll 'ee both down into the vuzz-bush, top o' Bullying Bob," said Low, giving them each a shake, and half tumbling them down on the turf.

"Be quiet, George. I'll tell 'Mima," cried the urchins.

"Now, here goes! Cousin's pardon, or down you roll."

"Hang it! I humbly beg your pardon," said Luke, making a face at Lachlan.

"Beg your pardon, grant your grace,——" began Mark.

"Do let them go, George," said Lachlan. "I don't want them to beg my pardon."

"But they shall, all the same;" and by dint of shaking and shoving, the pardon was begged.

"Now you may go home," said George.

"Thank'ee, I'm going to look after Bob Love. Oh, oh! don't he look grand down in the furze," said Luke.

Certainly, the young gentleman in question made but a sorry figure. He was kicking and sprawling in the middle of the furze, and quite incapable of rising; for the impetus of his descent had sent him so far into the bushes, that the prickles attacked him on all sides.

"Let 'un alone!" said George. "'Twill do 'un good," as Lachlan made a movement.

But Lachlan was off down the hill, and had soon succeeded in extricating his enemy. Having done this, and seen that no harm had happened beyond a scratched face and hands, and torn pantaloons, he left him with a look of disgust. Not so Low, however. No sooner did he see him limping up the hill, than he was after him; caught him by the arm, and lugged him, in his turn, towards Lachlan.

Master Robert Love was bigger and older than Lachlan, nevertheless he was a child in the muscular paw of George Low.

"Beg your cousin's pardon, sir," he cried, with a voice like a smith's bellows.

"He ain't my cousin," growled Master Love.

"Yes he be; and you shall own 'un for this once, at least. Say, 'Cousin, I beg your pardon.'"

He was obliged to say it before the resolute Low would let him off; and having done so slunk away, whilst Lachlan was saying—

"I don't want you to beg my pardon or to be my cousin."

"Well done, Bullying Bob," screamed Mark and Luke, clapping their hands.

"You young rascals," said Low. "What did 'ee mean by knocking cousin down?"

"'Twas only fun. They said they wanted to make a barrownight of him at once, and we joined. We didn't mean any harm, Cousin Lachlan," said Mark.

"But I don't beg your pardon," said Luke, running off as hard as he could.

It was dark and supper-time before they reached the Manor. Luke was telling the story to his assembled relations.

"Well done, George! Bravo, George! Didn't think he had such spirit!" greeted that hero, as he entered the hall.

He hung his head as if he had been committing a crime, when he heard the encomiums. Every true hero is equally modest.

"Shalt have 'Mima with all my heart, George," said Mr. Lyons, clapping him on the back. "I'm as glad as if I had a hundred pounds, that you've pulled down Bullying Bob a peg or so. Shalt have either of my girls. Pick and choose; spirit's better than learning, any day. There's Kern, the beauty, if you like to wait for her, and——"

"Really, father, I must beg——" said indignant Kern.

"You needn't trouble yourself, Kern," said Jemima; "he don't want you."

"If he did, he wouldn't have me."

"I wish, Job, you wouldn't talk of letting the dear children leave us," said Mrs. Lyons. "There's Matthew has just been nearly killing me—and I ain't so far from death as you all think: and now you want to get rid of another, and all along of Lachlan's coming here. I shall be left alone in my old age, and all the dear angels gone, nobody knows where. It is very unfeeling."

"Lor, mother! how you do go on always," said Jemima. "You spoil all our bit of fun."

"But if mother is to live to old age," said Kern, sarcastically, "how can she be so near death?"

"Now, do come to supper," interposed Kezia. "Cousin, I hope you weren't hurt?"

"Oh! wasn't he in a passion though!" said Luke. "You should 'a seen him knock down Bob Love."

"I'm proud of my nephew," said Mr. Lyons. "I'd rather have seen that than all the sums from here to London."

"You really don't mind my knocking him down, uncle? I thought you might have been angry."

"Mind it! I should think not. 'Tis the proudest day of my life. They've trampled

enough upon your poor father, and now it's our turn."

"Sit there, George, by Jemima," said Kezia.

George blushed and obeyed.

"I said all the parts of speech, zome o' the countries, and amost all the patriarchs, till I came to Joseph, and then, somehow, Jemima slipped out," he whispered, when they were seated: "but I shall never do the rule o' three. Now, what's the good? I can manage the varm with addition, substraction, and multiplication; why should I go and mix and mel'em all together in that voolish way?"

"Never mind, George; never mind," said Jemima, giving him a nudge, and looking at her father who had caught the words, and was enjoying the joke. "I don't mind any more, now that you've been so brave. There are the twins crying; I must go and see."

Jemima went to the cradle by the fire with a face redder than usual; but the twins were happily asleep.

"Jemima will have that country bumpkin after all, we shall see," whispered Kern to Lachlan. "He talks almost as broad as the farm men."

"He's a capital fellow," said Lachlan, enthusiastically. "I wish I was half such a man. Why, he's as strong and brave as a lion."

"I'll marry a gentleman, or I'll die an old maid," said Kern.

"Like the Miss Daws," cried Luke, who had heard every word from the other side of Kern. "Mrs. Kerenhappuch Lyons! Doesn't that sound grand, father?"

"We'll have a bottle of the best October, Kezia, to drink George's health. Bring the beer-glasses, Mima, whilst you're up," said Mr. Lyons. "Mat! what's the matter? Cheer up, lad! I'm afraid Miss——"

"Hush! father," said Kezia, "that's no joking matter."

"I'm sure Matthew ought to be low-spirited when he's been making me so miserable," said Mrs. Lyons. "I don't know who all my children turn after. None of 'em have any feeling."

"Never mind the feeling, mother," said Jemima. "Let's look on the bright side of things."

"And drink your health as well as George's, I suppose," said Mr. Lyons.

The October came, and under its influence Mrs. Lyons forgot her feelings, and George his shyness; and the rest of the evening was so convivial, that even Matthew cheered up and made one or two jokes upon George and Jemima, which they bore philosophically.

CHAPTER XI.

LACHLAN'S LECTURES.

The events of which the germ was laid in the last two chapters, came into flower or fruit during the following two years. Miss Eagles went daily to the Downs Farm to teach Aline; and Kern Lyons went also daily to learn with her. Madam Rambully remained in her bedroom till the lessons were over, and Miss Eagles had her pupils to herself. She was to teach Aline whatever she thought she could learn without great difficulty, with the exception of drawing, for which the child evinced a taste, but which Madam Rambully strictly forbade her learning.

Fluke had made periodical visits to the neighbouring town, and, it was supposed by John Dull, Joan, and others, had received letters from the post-office, and money from the bank; for she had been seen writing before she had made her visits—answering her letters, it was

suggested, against she got them—and had always returned with stores of everything needful for the family wardrobe and consumption.

Madam Rambully still wore her bonnet, veil, and "goggles," in the presence of strangers, and not even Mrs. Bull had seen her without them, except by chance. When the reason of this strange custom was asked, Fluke's ready answer always was, that her mistress was very nervous about her sight, and could not bear to be looked at, because her eyes were inflamed.

The sight, however, somewhat improved. Certainly, if rest could strengthen her eyes, they ought to have been strong enough; for she slept, or seemed to sleep, away more than three parts of her life.

Mr. Raven and his sister called as soon as they were able to go about their usual parish work, after Mrs. Raven's funeral. As Fluke had heard that they were to do so, it was settled, after much consultation, that they were to be received by Fluke and Aline; but it happened that they came upon Madam Rambully when she was sitting under the elms by the chapel, and made themselves known to her through Aline, who was with her.

As Mr. and Miss Raven were both shy people, and much out of spirits, they did not become

very intimate during this short visit. Moreover, Mr. Raven knew that he intended it as a ministerial visit, and had meant to press upon Madam Rambully the necessity of going to church, and various religious matters bearing upon her uncertain position in his parish; but he found it impossible to carry out his intentions. They talked of the country and the farm, whilst Miss Raven and Aline talked of more congenial matters; and so the time passed slowly, until the usual quarter of an hour of a first call was over.

"I like them, mamma!" was Aline's exclamation, when they were gone.

"Yes, my love, so do I; but how unfortunate they should have found us here."

"Oh, no, mamma. A clergyman will do you good. I am sure he will; he is better than a doctor. He preaches such kind sermons, and is so gentle. But he looked so frightened! He is not handsome, and so tall and thin! And you know he wears spectacles like you; blue ones, too. I could scarcely help laughing at him when he tried to look at you through his blue glasses, and your blue veil and blue spectacles."

"What is Miss Raven like?"

"Very like Mr. Raven, mamma. I think they must be twins, like Jacob and Esau Lyons. She

asked me to go and see her little nieces. Wasn't that kind, mamma? And may I go?"

"I think not, Aline; we must ask Fluke."

"Oh! Fluke will be sure to say no; she is so cross."

But Mr. Raven came again, and again; and Miss Raven also, though seldom together. Sometimes they saw Madam Rambully, sometimes they did not; but during the course of these two years, over which we are passing thus rapidly, they became more at ease with her, and even prevailed upon her to allow Aline to go to the Vicarage occasionally.

Of course, the Loves, Daws, and others, were much scandalized at this arrangement, and did not take any notice of Aline if they chanced to meet her there. We must except Miss Harriet Daw, who, removed from the influence of her sisters, was as kind to Aline as she was to Lachlan.

Mrs. Love once asked Aline whether her father was alive or dead, and her answer to the question did not improve the opinion that lady had formed of her mother.

"I am not allowed to talk of my papa, ma'am; so, if you please, I would rather not be asked about him," was Aline's reply.

However, from that period, the child's visits

to the Vicarage nearly ceased, and when she did go it was only for a short call with Fluke.

Fluke and she had one eventful day during these two years. They went to Jemima's wedding. By degrees, Fluke's mistrust of the Lyons' family wore off, and Aline was occasionally allowed to play with the young people when they came to see their grand-parents. Hence it arose that Jacob and Esau, as well as all the other Scriptural names of those ten children became, not only household words in the parlour, but the histories of their Biblical namesakes were better studied by Aline than by themselves. Lachlan and Kezia were her especial favourites, and they warmly returned her affection.

Jemima was married to George Low before he had mastered either the capital cities of Europe, or the rule of three. She said she was quite contented with him when she found that he could do something that nobody else could do; and nobody else had ever been able to put down Bob Love. Upon which Lachlan suggested that George had conquered Love and Jemima at the same time. Jemima also observed, that "it was indeed a blessing to get away from the twins, and all the children and mother's worries;" though she cried a little when she kissed them all and bade them good-bye. She was going to live about three

miles from them, with her husband's father, who was a widower, farmed his own estate, had no children but George, and was called the Squoire.

Poor Mrs. Lyons said that the house was quite empty when Jemima and Matthew were gone; for Matthew kept to his resolution of going to Australia, and left soon after Jemima's marriage. Mr. Lyons, on the contrary, thought that there would be a less heavy bill at the draper's, when the two outfits were paid for.

If, however, the "conquest of Love" brought about a marriage, it also was the cause of much village gossip and dissension. The circumstances of the knighting on the Downs, and the passages of arms it entailed, were variously related by the actors and spectators. The majority of the boys declared for Low and Lachlan, because they had shown the most spirit. The minority for Master Love.

Mr. Eagles would not let his plan of the lectures fall to the ground. He became greatly interested in Lachlan, and found that he not only had considerable talent, but indomitable perseverance. He made him write down all that he could remember of the scientific information he had gleaned in Australia, as well as his practical knowledge of the country, which was consider-

able. Mr. Eagles helped him. Miss Eagles, in her turn, became interested, and lent a hand and a very ready pen. Kern was indefatigable; and all the Lyons' family made common cause and did what they could.

The preparation for these lectures, and the arrangement of the specimens, took Lachlan more than a twelvemonth.

One merry Christmas had been passed at the Manor Farm since he arrived there, and another was approaching. Mr. Eagles was resolved that the winter should not wear through without bringing Lachlan a new suit of clothes, for his wardrobe was very bare. The old clothes that Matthew had bestowed upon him when he left home, were not much better than his own, and did not fit him; and he was of so proud a spirit, that he refused the new coat which his aunt offered him. It is true that the offer was made with a great many allusions to the number and requirements of her own children.

By November—the second of Lachlan's abode in England—the museum in the old loft was completed and Lachlan's Australian knowledge digested, and arranged in the form of a course of lectures. He had already delivered them to Mr. and Miss Eagles, and Kern, with great success; and began to feel some confidence in his powers.

Sixpence a head for the young men and threepence for the boys, was the modest sum asked in return for his store of learning. No one was to be admitted, except by tickets, procured beforehand from Mr. Eagles.

The 5th of November was the evening fixed upon for the first lecture, and about thirty shillings' worth of tickets had been sold. Lachlan's spirits were high at the prospect of so large an increase of income.

At seven o'clock on this eventful evening, the audience reached the foot of the ladder that was to lead them to so much learning; a literal, and not a figurative ladder, for there were no stairs to Lachlan's loft, the rungs of a somewhat unstable ladder supplied their place. The young men and boys ran up easily enough, but there was a cry of astonishment and distress when the great Captain Love appeared, and his gouty foot essayed in vain to place itself upon the ladder. To Lachlan's delight, and the Captain's annoyance, he was obliged to return home unlectured.

The lecture-room was low; the tallow candles were dull; the table on which Lachlan stood was ricketty; the forms on which his hearers sat were hard; still everybody was pleased.

Lachlan said his say, or read what he could not remember, about one portion of the physical

geography of Australia, in such a straightforward natural manner, that he had more applause at the end of his hour's lecture than many a wiser man has had after a laboured discourse.

When it was over, Mr. Eagles and he acted showmen to the specimens, and answered, as well as they could, the various questions of the audience. Mr. Raven assisted, and Mr. Bat put in a word now and then, and certain it is, that everybody present received the full value of their sixpences and threepences.

Lachlan was overwhelmed with compliments, and began to feel himself a professor. It must be acknowledged, that, despite of the general modesty of merit, he was rather proud of this his first essay. If Mr. Eagles pulled him down from that professorial chair in which he seated himself in imagination, by pointing out some mistakes in grammar and errors in facts, Messrs. Bull and Lyons soon pushed him into it again, by declaring that they expected to see him Lord Chancellor or Archbishop of Canterbury some one of these days.

It was announced that the lectures would continue once a fortnight, as long as Lachlan had anything to say.

During the course of the next fortnight, Lachlan was repeatedly asked to procure some larger

room. Mr. Eagles offered his schoolroom; and after some consideration and much labour it was arranged for the next lecture.

More than two pounds' worth of tickets went, and a goodly number of men and boys filled the schoolroom. Captain Love and his son, and the three Mr. Bats were present. The Captain was observed to be very attentive, and to take occasional notes. He was also heard to make disparaging remarks here and there. Lachlan did not care for him, but described the rivers that he had helped to explore, with his father and others, so vividly, that he was well applauded, in spite of Captain Love.

His fame increased, and George Low told him, that he knew a great deal more of Australia than he did of Europe; and could remember the Darling, Lachlan, Murray, and even that hard word, the Murrimbidgee rivers, better than he could the capital cities.

There was an article on Australia, the following week, in the "Dorset Director," in which a slight and disparaging mention was made of a "beardless youth," who had been pretending to lecture to the rising generation at Yeo, upon this great country, and was, thereby, misleading them. This put Lachlan on his mettle, and he and Mr. and Miss Eagles revised very carefully

the third lecture, which was to be on the geology of the country.

More than three pounds' worth of tickets were sold, though the subject did not promise to be so interesting. But Lachlan was more at home in it than the others, and had all his specimens around him for illustration.

Mr. Raven and the Mr. Bats applauded loudly. Captain Love listened attentively, and after the lecture was over examined the specimens, and disputed their genuineness. He knew as much about the matter as George Low; but then nobody else knew anything about it. Lachlan got into a passion, but that did not convince Captain Love.

There was another disparaging notice in the "Dorset Director," but there was also on another sheet a *résumé* of the three lectures, and a few words in praise of the young lecturer.

This was so well done that it was attributed to Mr. Eagles, who, however, strenuously denied having written it.

Lachlan's fame increased so rapidly that the ladies graced his next lecture, which was on the difference between Australian and Dorsetshire agriculture. He was now really alarmed; for he had a most chivalrous admiration of the fair sex.

However, the "Dorset Director" proved unmerciful about the farming; and the presence of a goodly number of ladies in their best bonnets —and even of some few in no bonnets at all— was not consolation enough to Lachlan for being cut up by that keen and trenchant knife—"Our Country Correspondent." He began to experience some of the pains and penalties of popularity.

But a counter article appeared the next week, still more keen and trenchant than that of the "Country Correspondent," cutting him up more cruelly than he had cut up Lachlan; literally mincing, not only his matter, but his manner, his orthography, etymology, syntax, and prosody.

"Who could have written it?" Nobody could guess. Mr. Eagles denied it absolutely. "Was it Mr. Raven?" "No;" he was the last man in the world to bring about a paper war. "Mr. Oliver Bat?" "No;" he was too lazy and too great a friend of Captain Love's.

Yeo and the nobility and gentry in the neighbourhood were much excited. Lachlan grew nervous, and declared he would lecture no more; Mr. Eagles and his relations declared he should.

Mr. and Miss Eagles and Lachlan sat up

together half of every night for the next fortnight, concocting the lecture on "Emigrants and Settlers."

A strange gentleman in black arrived at the "Yeo Arms" in a gig at five o'clock, and went to hear what Lachlan had to say at seven. This created a great sensation. After the lecture he spoke to Lachlan, examined the specimens, and went away.

The next number of the "Dorset Director" contained a few words from a new pen, contradicting the assertions of the "Country Correspondent" touching the genuineness of the specimens, and giving the young lecturer great credit for his energy and talent.

The next lecture was on the native Indian. Here again Lachlan was at home. He had seen a great deal of the Indians, was interested in them, and could describe their habits, customs, religion, and manners. Moreover, he had so many anecdotes of personal adventures amongst them to tell, that his only difficulty was to reduce his stock of knowledge into the small compass of an hour's reading.

Again the strange gentleman came, and the lecture was a signal success. Nevertheless, there appeared the most virulent abuse of it in the "Director."

But Lachlan's defendant was not silent the following week. Again the "Country Correspondent" was taken to pieces, and anatomized. But this was now supposed to be done by the gentleman in black.

CHAPTER XII.

TORRENTS OF RAIN.

THOSE "three heads in one cap," Lachlan and Mr. and Miss Eagles, decided that the sixth lecture should be the last. They would retire from the scene with honour, whilst their audience were untired, and whilst they had more to tell; and would not go on until they were exhausted, like many a greater lecturer and writer.

It was to be entitled "Pleasant Recollections," and Lachlan was surprised to find what an amount of paper the personal experience of his short life covered.

The boys ornamented their schoolroom with evergreens for this last attempt. The Australian birds were hung up amongst them, and the tallow candles were arranged with attention to the ladies' dresses. The big white dog—Yeo by name—sat at the top of the room, near Mr.

Eagles' desk, behind which Lachlan stood, and the specimens were ranged around him.

The effect was altogether imposing, and Lachlan felt shy and important. The schoolroom was so full that people were scarcely conscious of the presence of three or four strangers, or of Captain Love's absence, who was rendered unable to attend by the gout.

Our little friend Aline was there for the first time. She had begged so hard to hear Lachlan lecture only once, that her mamma had consented, and the unwilling Fluke had consigned her to the care of Miss Eagles, under promise that Mr. Bull should bring her back to the farm with him. Madam Rambully had given Miss Eagles ten shillings for Aline's ticket, and had begged that she might not be allowed to make any new acquaintances.

Seated between Miss Eagles and Kern, her hand within that of the former, and her large eyes fixed on Lachlan, Aline seemed quite happy that night.

Every one was there except Captain Love; even the three Miss Daws, in their large bonnets. And Lachlan felt this. He was resolved that the relations who disowned him should know that he was not a fool; and Daws and Loves were obliged to confess this much.

Very steadily, clearly, and unaffectedly, he went through his work. By degrees the old scenes and memories warmed him to something like forgetfulness of his auditors, and he became quite enthusiastic in his descriptions.

But I am not going through his lecture. Almost everybody knows by books now what he knew by experience then. Suffice it to say that it was well received by every one present. The educated portion of his hearers gave him credit for a good amount of talent and observation; the less learned thought him a prodigy. No wonder that Lachlan well nigh lost his head; would have done so entirely had not Mr. Eagles kept it upon his shoulders. Popularity is dangerous, even in the small village of Yeo; and he is a lucky and sensible fellow who can so withstand it.

Towards the close of his lecture, the rain was heard to fall in torrents upon the roof of the schoolroom. It beat against the windows, splashed upon the ground, made itself heard everywhere.

When Lachlan had finished, and the applause had subsided, and while the gentlemen were helping off his head by praising him, shaking hands with him, and making a hero of him, the ladies were wondering how they could get home.

It was not rain, it was a regular waterspout. Nobody could possibly put his head out of doors on such a night.

Wheels were heard, and soon after Mr. Bat's coachman came into the room, and told his master that he had brought the carriage because it was impossible for them to walk home.

"Then how can you and the horses manage, eh, Tom?" said Mr. Bat. "But never mind, we must make use of you now you are here. Ladies, they are at your service; it is the old family coach, and will hold a good many."

The ladies crowded round Mr. Bat. Mr. Eagles appeared with all the umbrellas and thick cloaks he could muster.

"Now, Mrs. Love, allow me," said Mr. Bat. "Eagles, take Miss Daw. Brother, see to Miss Margaret, and Miss Harriet; I dare say the young ladies will find beaux. I beg your pardon, cousin Ann, I didn't mean to infer that you were an old lady."

"But you may quite venture to do so," said Miss Daw, severely.

"Oliver, bring Margaret Anne," said Mr. Bat.

"We must wait till the umbrellas come back, brother," said Mr. Oliver Bat, who was leaning against a wall, watching the arrangements, and

seeming greatly interested in Miss Eagles' attempt to make her small cloak meet over Mrs. Love's portly person.

Mr. Nicholas Bat now came forward, seeing that Oliver would not.

"Here are all the clogs and pattens I can find, ladies," said Farmer Bull, who had been to the house in search of them, and was already dripping with wet.

"Daddy, you will take cold," whispered Aline, as he turned round.

"Where's Harriet?" asked Miss Daw.

Harriet was at that moment shaking hands with Lachlan, after having accepted one of his Australian birds, which he had offered to give her.

"How can you?" whispered her sisters.

"Oh, sisters! he is quite an honour to us all, I am sure."

Further remonstrance was cut short, for Mrs. Love, the three Miss Daws, and two ladies who were visiting at Mrs. Love's were hurried down a rivulet of gravel to the carriage in the road.

"Drive quick, and come back again, Tom," said Mr. Bat.

Mr. Bat went back to the schoolroom.

"Eagles, where's your fiddle? Let's have a country dance to keep us warm," he said.

"Clear off the benches, boys, and don't any of you ladies go out such a night as this. I shall be sorry to give my good horses, Beau and Belle, a cold, but still more sorry to give you a cold."

The benches were cleared, Mr. Eagles' fiddle found, and a country dance formed, in almost less time than it takes to write it.

In a quarter of an hour the carriage returned, and Miss Love was obliged to stop in the very centre of the country dance which she was going down with Mr. Perch, to be hurried off to the carriage, followed by the Ravens and one or two others who lived near them.

"Now, little miss, you must dance with me," said Mr. Bat, taking Aline's hand, and carrying her off in spite of Miss Eagles' entreaties.

"You have now no longer an excuse, Miss Eagles," said Mr. Oliver, offering that lady an arm, whose dark face flushed red as she took it.

Mr. Eagles fiddled, and they danced on till the carriage came again.

It was now the Lyons' turn, but Kern manœuvred to stay behind till the carriage was more than full, and went on teaching Lachlan the figure. But Lachlan and many other youths were absorbed in admiration of Aline's dancing, who tripped it with her tall partner like a little fairy. Kern gave up Lachlan in wrath, and was

seized upon by Master Robert Love, who looked at her as if he thought she was the prettiest girl in the world.

Once more the carriage came, and ended the ball. The last detachment of ladies disappeared, the young men braved the rain, and nobody was left but the Bats, Lachlan, Mr. Bull, and Aline. They accompanied Mr. and Miss Eagles to the house.

"Where do you keep yourself, Miss Ellen?" asked Mr. Oliver Bat, as they all stood drying themselves by the parlour fire.

"*I* should rather ask that question, I think," said Miss Eagles. "I walk a daily round from this house to the Downs Farm, thence to Yeo, thence to this house again."

"Always at work?"

"Always."

"And the reading and writing?"

"I have not much time for either. And yours?"

"I am tired to death of both, and am thinking of taking up fishing or farming, like my brothers."

"That would be a pity."

"Why?"

"Because variety is pleasant; and one, at least, out of three should be a scholar."

"I have had a box of foreign books down lately. Shall I send you some?"

"Thank you. You know what a treat they always are to me."

"How does the German get on?"

"Very slowly. I have crept through the grammar, stumbling at every inflection, and never mastering one; walked pretty briskly through Schiller, and am now floundering in Goethe."

"Goethe? You read him? A lady, and——"

"A teacher. Yes; why not? How can the grand, vain man hurt me, shut in between these four silent walls? My father does not object, and no one else——"

"Has any right. Well, we were always at issue, and absence doesn't improve us. At any rate, we agree in the difficulty of the German language; but if Coleridge found it quite impracticable, there is some excuse for us."

"You are not to suppose that I like books which are banned for women. I do not, and never read them. But such a poet as Goethe is, like Shakspeare, for every clime, age, and sex."

"Excuse me for differing with you. Shakspeare's is the coarseness and stern morality of a man who writes the language of his age. Goethe's the metaphysical doubts of a man of

uncertain morality and religion. I should be sorry to see you add the German theology to your other strong-minded notions."

Miss Eagles' brows met, and her eyes glanced fire on Mr. Bat. That bird of night, however, stood the glance with much unconcern, indeed, seemed rather pleased at it.

"Thank you for giving me one of your old looks, Miss Ellen," was all he said, as he turned round to answer some question put to him by his brother.

Whilst this little conversation was going on, Mr. Bat had been showing Aline all the pictures that were hung round the room, and Mr. Nicholas had been making further acquaintance with Lachlan by the aid of Mr. Eagles and Mr. Bull.

"Shall we take this little lady home, Miss Eagles?" asked Mr. Bat. "That is to say if we can find our way across that dreadful road of yours, Mr. Bull. She cannot possibly go across the Downs to-night."

"Thank you, Mr. Bat; she must certainly sleep here to-night," said Miss Eagles.

"Oh, Miss Eagles," said Aline, coming to her side, "I must go home, mamma will be so frightened; she will cry, and——"

"Mr. Bull will take a note from me, and I will be responsible, Aline."

"Daddy will take cold; he mustn't go out in this rain. Lachlan said he would take me home. Oh! Miss Eagles, I must go."

This was said in a half-whisper, heard by Mr. Oliver alone.

"Aline, you will stay here to-night," said Miss Eagles decidedly, the black brows knitting.

Aline's arms were round Miss Eagles, and her eyes looking up appealingly, with gathering tears in them.

"If mamma cries, Miss Eagles, it will be worse than the rain. Do, dear Miss Eagles!"

Miss Eagles sat down, as she thought, unobserved, and as the black brows unbent, the voice softened. She put her arm round Aline's waist, and said gently, "My dear child, listen to the rain! Your mamma would cry more if you were to take a bad cold, or cause Mr. Bat's carriage to be upset—and I will write. Will you not try to be happy with me for one night?"

"It is not that, Miss Eagles," said Aline, kissing her, "but mother."

"Trust me this once, Aline, and if I am not right I will not ask you again."

Miss Eagles went to a writing-table, and wrote a short note.

"Come here, Miss Aline," said Mr. Oliver, taking the child's hand, and leading her to the

passage; "just look at the rain. You could not go home. Now, will you tell me how and why you conquered Miss Eagles?"

"I did not, sir; I never can. Fluke says she is the only person who ever managed me."

"But she was kind and gentle with you."

"Oh, yes! that is because I love her, and she loves me."

Mr. Oliver looked into Aline's large, soft, innocent eyes, and saw how it was.

"It is Una and the Lion—Aline and the Eagle," he murmured, as he took her back to the drawing-room just as Miss Eagles was giving Mr. Bull the note.

The carriage wheels were heard.

"We will drop you at the top of your execrable road, Bull," said Mr. Bat, "and you at your uncle's, Master Lachlan, and then I think Beau and Belle will have done their duty, and deserve to go home, have a good feed of corn, and go to bed."

"I am glad to see you have found your master at last, Miss Ellen," said Mr. Oliver, glancing at Aline. "That is the sweetest child I ever saw. I wish she were a little older."

"She will grow up fast enough, we all do," said Miss Eagles, the brows meeting once more.

Mr. Oliver looked at Ellen Eagles. The

colour showed through her dark cheeks. He had known her when she was Aline's age, and he a man of five-and-twenty.

"I will send you the books, Ellen," he said, shaking hands with her, and remembering those days when her brother and he were friends, and she the pet of both.

She turned away her head, but her cheeks flushed more than ever, and her eyes brightened. She saw Lachlan and Aline in deep conversation. Aline was begging Lachlan to go to the Downs instead of her daddy, and to let him sleep at the Manor, because she was sure he would take cold.

She kissed Mr. Bull before he went away, but declined bestowing the same favour on Mr. Bat, looking surprised and indignant at him for asking her so to do, because, as she said afterwards, she had never spoken to him before that night.

Mr. Eagles was out in the rain bestowing a glass of something very hot and strong on the coachman.

"Go in; go in!" said Mr. Nicholas Bat. "This young fellow is coming for a day's fishing with me, next spring; I think I shall teach him how to bear a wetting to-night, by way of preparation."

The rain continued to pour down as the car-

riage drove off, and Mr. Eagles locked up his house for the night.

Strange as it may seem, Aline had never been in "the Nest," as Mr. Eagles had named his cottage, before, and had never before spoken to Mr. Eagles. He had often wished to know the little girl of whom his daughter and Lachlan were so fond, but Miss Eagles had never asked her to the house, not choosing to run the chance of a refusal.

She was, however, there at last, and before she had finished her supper, was on very good terms with Mr. Eagles, who looked at her and spoke to her, with the same interest that she seemed to inspire in every one.

Miss Eagles had set to work when she first began teaching her, with the resolution to tame and educate a wild, spoilt child; but even she was in danger of adding her mite to the task of spoiling her, and of growing lax in the teaching.

"How did you like the lecture, my dear?" began Mr. Eagles.

"I liked to hear Lachlan say it, sir, very much indeed; and I longed to go to Australia to see the birds and the rivers; but I think the Downs and Yeo must be prettier and pleasanter."

"Why?"

"Because I hate wandering about, and like a snug, quiet valley where I can do what I like, and there is no one to see me. I hope I shall never go away from the Downs."

"Ellen tells me you have been abroad, my dear, and can talk French and Italian like a little native of France or Italy; and yet you do not like roving."

"Oh, no! Kern says she wishes she could go abroad, but I only wish to stay at home. Miss Eagles, Lachlan says he means to give me his cockatoo, and a pair of little birds, if I may have them. I think they will amuse mamma, but I like Jack ten times as well."

"Kern will be jealous, I fear, if you have all the birds."

"Then I will not have them. I can't bear jealous people. I told Kern so."

"What did she say?"

"Laughed, and wondered what I could possibly know about jealousy."

Miss Eagles' brows bent for the first time, and she addressed her father.

"The Loves have not forgiven Lachlan. I saw them trying to make mischief to-night. Lachlan says he will go away if this kind of animosity lasts; and he is right. Bullying Bob cannot get over the knighting."

"I should be so sorry," said Aline.

"So should I," said Mr. Eagles; "but he will never do anything here."

Aline slept with Miss Eagles. When they were in their bedroom, she said—

"Who painted all those beautiful pictures? I could look at them for ever."

"I will tell you, Aline, if you will not name the subject before my father. They were painted by my brother many years ago. He was a great genius. We hoped that he would be a great man, and distinguish himself, but he left us many years ago, and we have never heard from him since."

"How very sad! And did he paint all those pictures without being taught?"

"No; he studied in London, and would have gone abroad, if we could have afforded it; but as it was he nearly ruined us. Oh, Aline! I have never mentioned this subject to any human being but to Mrs. Raven, who is gone; and why I do so to you, I cannot tell—a child, a pupil, a stranger—unless it is that you are so much dearer to me already than any one else, and are the only one, except my father, who has shown me any natural affection."

"Dear Miss Eagles, I will never tell any one, except mamma, what you say to me; and

I never talk to her about painting because it troubles her, so I had better not tell her of your brother. Perhaps he does not like writing, and will come back some day, as Lachlan did; perhaps he is gone to Australia."

"Perhaps! Oh, Aline! I loved him so dearly. I worshipped him. He was more than ten years older than I was. My father married twice, and his mother was not mine; but we were not the less brother and sister. Our whole lives changed when he left us. We were cheerful and happy until then."

"Was he like you, Miss Eagles?"

"No; he was very handsome. His beauty and his talents proved his ruin, for he was courted and spoilt by every one. My poor father indulged him in all his fancies, and long before he came into this neighbourhood he was the admiration of most people. That is why my father is so afraid of Lachlan's being a genius, and why I fear to spoil you."

"Lachlan is too good to be spoilt, Miss Eagles; and I am not clever, you know, like Kern, so I do not think I shall be spoilt either. Indeed, I am determined I will not be spoilt, since I see what trouble I may cause. I am so very sorry for you, and for your poor father."

Tears came into Aline's eyes; those ready tears that flowed at every tale of sorrow.

Miss Eagles put her arms round her, kissed her, and burst into tears also.

Miss Eagles was sitting on the bed, and Aline was standing by her side. They remained silent for a few minutes. At last Miss Eagles started up and said—

"Aline, you have seen a weakness in which you could not have believed had you not witnessed it. It will, perhaps, teach you not to judge from appearances, as everybody judges my father and me, even our oldest friends. Try to think, when I seem stern and determined with you at your lessons, that I do not love you the less because I strive to do my duty."

"Oh! I never, never do, dear Miss Eagles. But if you will only believe that sometimes I cannot learn try as I will. When I hear Jack calling me, or the swallows twittering in the thatch, or the sheep bleating on the downs, my mind goes away to them. It is worse in the summer than the winter. In summer, the scent of the flowers through the window, the warm air in the curtains, the clouds floating in the sky, the sun shining on the hills, all seems to call me out of doors, and my lessons run away from me as if I had never known them, and try as I will, I can-

not call them back. It was not so in those dull French towns; I learnt better there."

"Dear child, we will try to make excuses for one another henceforth. And now you must go to bed."

"Only one question, Miss Eagles. Do you think this great rain will swell the brook, and so the house will be flooded, and I shall not be able to get back to mamma to-morrow?"

"I certainly do not, Aline."

Miss Eagles undressed her tenderly, and sat by her till she went to sleep: then she sat watching her, and thinking half aloud, some such words as these: "Am I a wild animal that I could so often make that innocent lamb weep, as I have done in the last twelvemonth? No: she cannot learn under those influences. I ought to have known it: I who find it so hard to teach when all the poetry of nature is calling me abroad. Duty! one's daily bread! What hard, unfeeling words they are. If it were not for my father, I could not bear them. But I have been a weak fool to give way before Aline. It was that one kind word—that 'Ellen' did it all. After so much careless neglect, to be conquered by a word—and I thinking myself so strong! But it shall be only for a moment and then——"

She buried her face in the pillow close to Aline for a few seconds, then rose, and putting on a warm cloak sat down to an open desk, that was on a table at the foot of the bed. She took out some papers, and arranged them methodically before her; then she put her elbow on the desk and her cheek on her hand, and thought—thought perhaps for a quarter of an hour. Hers was not an eye "in a fine frenzy rolling," but one, earnest, bright, steadfast; fixed—like the eagle's on the sun—on some imaginary object in the great spirit-peopled world around her. Any one who had seen her at that moment, would scarcely have known her as the prompt, short-spoken, excitable Ellen Eagles of the day. Night had calmed her, and could scarcely have quieted a more fitting embodiment of herself. The heavy black-braided hair and thick black brow; the deep, far-searching black eyes; the pale, dark face; the white hand and arm, and the large black cloak; she might have sat for a picture of Nox herself; whilst near her slumbered the young morning twilight, with the arm on the white coverlet, as if making the first stroke for daylight, and the rosy lips parted, as touched by the first rays of the sun.

Suddenly Ellen's eyelids fell, and the dreamy look was gone. Brisk and animated again she

took her pen and wrote—wrote on till midnight was long past, when, cold and weary, she crept to the side of the sleeping child whom she was learning to love.

CHAPTER XIII.

A RAID ON THE ROOKS.

VARIOUS were the results of Lachlan's lectures. Again the "Dorset Director" cut him up in one column, and praised him in another; and again these antagonists cut one another up the week after. This led to various papers on Australia, and emigration generally; to some clever and cutting verses from Lachlan's supporter; and to a prolongation of the gossip and surmises at Yeo.

A letter reached Lachlan from a gentleman in the neighbouring county town requesting him to come and deliver a course of lectures there. He and his adviser Mr. Eagles, resolved to decline the honour; his relations wished him to accept it: so disputes arose on this head, which resulted in a quarrel between his uncle and aunt, the latter of whom gave him very strong hints about maintaining himself, which he was really more than doing by his farm work. His uncle was anxious for his further reputation; his aunt was jealous of what he had already gained; and did

not see "why a foreign nephew should come home and set the country afire, when her own children were quiet and peaceable, and never did any mischief. It made her quite sick to hear such a talk over the place; and all about nothing. If it hadn't been for him, Matthew would never have gone away; and there wouldn't have been all this stir and bother. She wasn't used to be talked about and written about, nor any one belonging to her, and she didn't choose to be now. It would be the death of her."

George Low invited Lachlan to go and stay with him and Mima, but Lachlan said he must earn his own living, and was not afraid that something would offer for him. He told George that he was an orphan, and that his Heavenly Father was sure to put the right thing in his mind at the right time.

"Where did 'ee learn that, Lachlan?" asked George.

"The Bible tells me so. And I have proved it, and shall prove it again. I'm off to seek my fortune, like Whittington."

"Don't 'ee go away, Lachlan; Mima hopes you'll come and live with us."

"No, thank you, George. When you see me next I shall be on the road to fortune. I am not going to stay anywhere to be quarrelled about;

and I know very well what aunt says and thinks."

"More shame for her. I'll tell her zo, be hanged if I don't. I never saw such a complaining woman in all my life. I wonder father-in-law's soul isn't worritted out of un. Mima isn't like her, that's one comfort. Here she is. I'm zure I can't hold in, no how."

"Then do go home, George."

"No, that I won't. 'Twas you got me Mima, and I'll stand up for 'ee as long as I live."

This conversation took place in the hall at the Manor, and was interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Lyons, who had Jacob in her arms and Esau tugging at her gown. The twins were now "strong on their feet, and in their lungs," as Mr. Bull said.

One after another the other members of the family dropped in to dinner, and joined in the debate that ensued.

"Now, mother-law," began George. "I want to know what you've got agen Lachlan. He does more work than any boy on the varm; nurses those plagues of twins a sight more than I could, and hasn't got a coat to his back worth my old shoe."

"I'm sure I haven't got anything against him, and it is very unkind and ungrateful of him if he

says that I have. I've worry enough with my own children, without having him to think about and complain of me; and now you, George, to be beginning too!"

"Now, mother-law, 'tis no good to be whining like a sucking-pig. Mima al'as said, once put your pipe out, and one med as well be in a pound with a stray lamb; and now your pipe's never in."

"George, you're very rude and unfeeling, and Mima ought to be ashamed of herself for saying such things of her poor mother, who's always ailing."

Mrs. Lyons began to cry, and Jacob and Esau made an *ad libitum* accompaniment.

"Those twins are like our young calves bellowing after the cows, only they don't blare so when their mother's near. I should like to——"

"What will you say next, George? My little angels! Do you hear your own brother-in-law insulting you and me, and all because cousin Lachlan came here?"

"Tousin dood—do to tousin," screamed the twins, the one running to Lachlan, the other struggling in his mother's arms.

"Children and all alike," said Mr. Lyons, who had come in unnoticed; "but we needn't grudge the poor boy his bit of praise, Rhoda, I think, even if we grudge him his victuals."

"I'm sure I don't grudge him his victuals, and it's very unfeeling of you to say so; but you're always conspiring against me; even George, who has no right to meddle and make, that I see, must needs put in his word."

"My fardith's as good as another's, mother-law; but I mean to say that I'll fight anybody who insults Lachlan, and if you don't like to keep un, I will."

"Bravo, George!" said Mr. Lyons.

There was a momentary pause, so Lachlan "up and spake."

"Uncle and aunt, I am very sorry I ever came here to make all this mischief: I assure you I didn't mean or wish to do it. I am very much obliged to you and my cousins, and George, for all your kindness to me, and if the day should come when I can repay it, I will. But I don't want to stay anywhere to be quarrelled about. If you will give my curiosities house-room for a time, I shall go and seek my fortune elsewhere, and come back again some day when the people here have forgotten me, the baronetcy, and the lectures."

"Indeed you are not going away, cousin," interrupted Kern. "And you needn't leave us on account of the lectures, for Miss Eagles has just told me that there is nothing about them in

this week's 'Director,' though she thought there would be. She said the new railroad had quite cut through all the other news, and you with it."

Lachlan looked disappointed. It must be confessed that he liked his popularity, and felt suddenly cast down from a height when he heard that he was no longer one of the themes for the "Director's" pen.

"I will get work on the railroad then," he said, after a pause.

"How?—in what way? What do you know about it?" asked the family, simultaneously.

"As a navvy, to be sure."

"A navvy—what's a navvy?" said Mrs. Lyons. "I'm sure I don't want you to go to sea again. Don't say that I sent you away: I should never forgive myself if anything were to happen to you."

"Thank you, aunt; but you needn't be afraid. It is only another sort of farming."

"Don't be so absurd, Lachlan," said Kern. "A navvy, indeed! why, they are the roughest, rudest people in England."

"That will just suit me. I shall go about and see the country, and learn engineering; I shall pick up geological specimens; and I shan't want that new coat I was just going to have made—

only a navvy's dress, and a smock-frock. Now, aunt, may I extend my visit one week more?"

"I'm sure you may stay here as long as you like, Lachlan, so you needn't throw all the blame upon me; and if you do go and become a navvy, we shall always be glad to see you, and ——"

"I do wish you would all come to dinner," said Mark. "I'm famished. 'Tis no good waiting for Luke, he's kept in."

"No, here I am!" cried that worthy, bursting into the room. "And do you know somebody has shot one of the Miss Daws' sacred rooks. His corpus was found dead. There has been an inquest of women, and Mr. Raven was crowner; and the witnesses declared that Lachlan Lyons shot it."

"What a lie!" said Lachlan.

"But everybody believes it. You had father's gun yesterday, and yesterday the murder was committed. The Daws are flying about everywhere, and the whole village is in a fuss. The rookery has been disturbed, and the five other rooks are going to put on crape. Let's have dinner: I want to go back and hear the end. 'Tis such famous fun. The rook is to be buried in state, and I shouldn't wonder if another was to die, to be its companion. Mrs. Daw heard a gun

last evening, but little thought who was murdered."

"I know who did it," said Lachlan. "It was Bob Love: I saw him with a gun last night, when I was coming home from the Nest, but he didn't see me."

"Another feather in your cap, Lachlan," said Mr. Lyons.

"I'll put it into that bully's before I go away," said Lachlan. "George, will you help me?"

"To be sure I will," said George.

Lachlan was universally believed to be the culprit. George Low was heard to say that he hoped he had done it, and would do the same again, killing two the next time. This speech was reported, with additions, by Robert Love to the Miss Daws, and, as coming from a relation, supposed to confirm their suspicions. Even the gentle Miss Harriet began to feel sorry that she had accepted the Australian birds.

A man was set to watch the clump of fir trees three successive nights, after which even the Miss Daws allowed the murdered rook to be a dead letter, and let his remains rest in peace beneath the haunts of his own and his ancestors' bodies in life.

The fourth night Lachlan and George Low

watched the fir trees from behind a hedge which divided one of Mr. Lyons's fields from the Miss Daws' garden. All that they saw worthy of note were the shadows of mysterious female figures across the window-blinds, and heads occasionally peeping out from between them and the windows.

The fifth night they watched again; still nothing disturbed the union of those aristocratic crests. The heads appeared more seldom at the bedroom windows, and the fears of the trembling Daws appeared to be subsiding.

But Lachlan and Low watched on. The sixth night their perseverance and resolution were duly rewarded. At about eleven o'clock they saw, beneath the uncertain light of a somewhat clouded February moon, a figure creep through the garden and ascend the mount on which the fir trees were planted. Had they been watching a genuine murderer their hearts could not have beat faster.

"Now," said George, in a whisper.

Lachlan crept along under the hedge, scrambled through it, and, taking the opposite side of the garden and house to that on which the trees were, was soon at the front door, and with his hands on the knocker and bell.

He had not been there many moments when bang! bang! went a gun. Simultaneously bell

and knocker began to work, and there was a cry and a scuffle behind the house.

A head was popped out of a window in front.

"Who is there? What's the matter?" sounded from the sharp voice of Miss Margaret Daw.

"Come down, ma'am. We have caught the fellow," cried Lachlan, much excited.

"Don't, sister! don't, ma'am! Come in, missus, they may be thieves and murderers. Don't venture down, sister," sounded through the open window.

"I certainly shall: I heard the guns," said Miss Daw. "Coming directly!" and the window closed again.

There was now a scuffle on the gravel walk, and Lachlan heard George's gruff voice saying, "Come along—gun and all! 'Tis no good to struggle. I know'ee well enough, and you know me."

"Let me go this once. I'll give you twenty pounds to let me go. I'll make friends with him: I'll tell aunts 'twasn't he—anything. Let me go," said another voice.

"Dang me, if I do, Master Bob. Murder will out, you see," and George Low laughed with all his heart, as he pulled the struggling Robert Love up to his aunts' door with one hand, and carried

the gun with the other. Just as they reached the porch in which Lachlan was standing, the door slowly opened, and a candle and head were poked out.

"Who is there?" said Miss Margaret, in a deep masculine voice.

"Don't be afraid, ma'am," said Lachlan, "it is only your nephew, Mr. Robert Love, Mr. George Low, and I, Lachlan Lyons."

Lachlan had determined that this, his second visit to his maternal relatives, should in no wise derogate from the first.

The door was opened wide, and a remarkable group was presented to the face of the moon, who was looking in upon it.

Miss Margaret stood foremost, with a pistol in her hand. She was attired in a flannel dressing-gown of ancient make, and yellow colour. It seemed to fit her perfectly from neck to ankle. Her stockingless feet were lost in a pair of large red slippers, and her night-capped and frontless head was crowned with a large bonnet.

Close behind, and looking over her shoulders, appeared Miss Ann, enveloped in a very large brown cloak, the night-cap not surmounted by a bonnet, and a poker in her hand. At a little distance, trembling very much, and hand in hand, were Miss Harriet and the cook, encouraging one

another to proceed, and behind them was the housemaid. The man-servant did not sleep in the house.

Miss Harriet had put on her gown and day-cap, the latter very much awry; and the cook had been particular in the matter of stockings, which were black, whilst the remaining part of her attire was miscellaneous in the extreme.

The horror of their faces may be imagined when the light of the candle fell upon the angry countenance of their grand-nephew Robert, triumphantly dragged into the hall by George Low, and attended by their other grand-nephew, Lachlan.

"There, that'll do," said Robert Love, shaking himself loose from George's grip, who was standing with his back against the door, which he had taken care to close.

"I caught him in the act, ladies," said George. "I've just brought 'un in to show 'un to ee, and the gun along with 'un. Lachlan's too brave a fellow to frighten women, and kill harmless rooks for sport; and I don't choose 'un to be lied about, so we watched. I should like the Cap'en to see the gun, so should be obliged if you'd keep 'un till to-morrow. He's a precious brave chap, that grand-nephew of yours, ma'am; but the other grand-nephew is the bravest, our Lachlan."

Miss Daw looked at Robert Love with stern contempt. Robert returned the gaze doggedly, and then burst out laughing.

"Well, aunts," he said, "I should like you to look at yourselves in the glass. 'Twas worth while shooting a couple of old rooks to see you all."

"Would you oblige me by going to Captain Love's, and knocking him up, and begging him or Mrs. Love to come here?" said Miss Daw, looking at Lachlan and George.

"I would rather not do that," said Lachlan. "All we wanted was to convince you that I had not shot your rook, and to assure you that I would scorn to do it."

"Better let 'un go now, ladies: there'll be time enough to tell his father to-morrow. The old gentleman will laugh and storm together, I'll be bound; and the old lady'll kiss and scold."

Miss Harriet and the maids had disappeared into one of the sitting-rooms, and were listening through the open door, leaving Miss Daw and Miss Ann to confront their guests.

"Scarcely an old lady yet, Mr. Low," said Miss Ann.

"I fear you are right," said Miss Margaret. "Spoilt children never turn out well. Robert, you may go."

"No hurry, aunt," said the unabashed Robert. "Never saw you look so handsome."

"Begone, sir! Open the door, Mr. Low, and put him out."

"Very inhospitable," said Robert, as George opened the door.

Robert Love was rather a handsome youth, with a bold, bad expression of countenance—if, indeed, the well-shaped but heavy features could be said to have any expression at all. He was said to be clever at nothing but mischief and bullying.

"Good night, aunts," he said, as he saw George's muscular arm raised. "Don't believe those low fellows. Sorry to have disturbed you so early: hope you won't take cold," then to George and Lachlan, aside, "I'll have my revenge one of these days."

"Ready to fight you to-morrow," said George; "but you'd better be off to-night," and therewith pointed to the door.

Robert went out, grinning fiercely, and the others prepared to follow.

"Will you take anything, young men?" said Miss Daw; "you must be cold."

"Nothing, thank you," said Lachlan. "I hope you believe that I have not shot your birds?"

"Certainly," said Miss Daw.

"Certainly," said Miss Ann.

"Then, ladies, I wish you good-bye. I am going away the day after to-morrow, and may never see you again; so I would thank you, in my father and mother's names, as well as my own, for your great hospitality to me since I have been at Yeo."

So saying, Lachlan put on a magnificent air, which, despite his shabby clothes, he was well able to do, and walked out of the house.

"Good-night, Miss Daw; good-night, Miss Ann," said downright George, insisting on shaking hands with the ladies. "I'll call again, and try your tap. Let me advise 'ee, as one as wishes 'ee both well, to turn Lachlan over in your minds when you make your will. He'd do a sight more good with your money, and take more care o' the rooks, than them proud, conceited Loves. Not one of 'em worth a penny but Mrs. Love, and she's a lady, though she do talk like a water-mill. Sorry to have disturbed 'ee. Take care o' the gun; needn't be afraid; 'tisn't loaded. I'll stop all night if you like——"

"Oh, I wish you would!" said a weak voice from the parlour. "Do 'ee, Measter George, do 'ee," said another.

"Harriet, don't be so silly."

"Betty, hold your tongue," said the ladies.

"Thank you; we shall do very well. Much obliged. We will have an examination of the gun and the poor dead rooks to-morrow—oh, dear!—when, perhaps, your presence may be required——"

"Can't come, nohow. Don't want to have any more to do with it. Good-night, ma'am; good-night, miss;" and so saying, George went away. "What will Mima say? She'll wish the rooks anywhere. So do I, for that much; but I baint going to let 'em put all the blame upon Lachlan, and I'll fight for 'un as long as I've a drop o' blood left."

"Thank 'ee, cousin George," said Lachlan; "and I'll do the same for you."

With this laudable resolve they hurried off homewards.

CHAPTER XIV.

LACHLAN'S ADIEUX.

LACHLAN had made up his mind, and no persuasions would alter it. He would get work on the railroad, somewhere or other, which would be for him, he felt sure, a railroad to fame and fortune.

The following morning he set forth alone to make his adieux.

His first visit was to Mr. Raven, who had been very kind to him, and had done what he could to give him good advice.

After a few natural explanations, Mr. Raven said: "You will not leave Yeo without forgiving your enemies, if you have any?"

"I have no ill-feeling towards any one in Yeo, sir; so I have nothing to forgive."

"Would you shake hands with young Love? He is here now, reading with me."

"I would rather not; and I am sure he

wouldn't shake hands with me. I hate touching the hand that has done a mean, dirty trick."

"I have been talking very seriously to him about last night, and he seems penitent. It might be good for him, if not for you, to feel that you part friends."

"But we couldn't part friends, sir. I could never be a friend to a man I could not respect, although I would never do him an injury. I bear Mr. Robert Love no ill-will, but I despise him with all my heart, and wish we were not cousins, which we are, and neither he nor I can help that."

Mr. Raven looked perplexed. He was always trying to reconcile the adverse spirits of his parish, but constantly without success. He quoted, however, many portions of the New Testament to Lachlan concerning the necessity of "loving his enemies, forgiveness of injuries," and the like, to which Lachlan listened attentively.

"If you wish it, sir," he said, "I am quite willing to shake hands with Robert Love, if he is willing to do the same; but not if he is forced to it, as my cousin, George Low, forced him to beg my pardon. As to loving him, I can't do that; as to forgiving him, why, having had the best of it, I have nothing to forgive; and I

would rather hear no more of him or his relations, for they have treated me as if I was a savage."

"Very difficult; very difficult," muttered Mr. Raven, rising. "Excuse me for a few minutes," he added, and left the room.

He was so long absent that Lachlan was impatient to go.

He returned, however, at last, looking greatly annoyed, with some books in his hand.

"You are right, my boy," he said. "Robert Love is less of a Christian than you."

"He won't shake hands with me? I knew that, sir, and I am very glad."

"It seems that there has been a great fuss between the Miss Daws and the Loves about these hapless rooks, and Robert has had a severe reprimand from his father, and is likely to lose the favour of his aunts. They were terribly frightened last night."

Lachlan began to laugh. He could not help it as he remembered the old ladies. Mr. Raven laughed too.

"One thing, sir, I should be glad if you would do for me when I am gone: tell the Miss Daws that I am sorry to have knocked them up as I did. I don't think that was quite right, though they deserved it from me; but there was no

other way of making them believe that I didn't shoot that ridiculous old rook."

"Will you accept these books, and read them, for my sake?"

"Thank you, sir; I will."

The books which Mr. Raven gave Lachlan were a Bible, Prayer-book, and Bishop Wilson's "Meditations."

"I wish I had done more for you, Lachlan," Mr. Raven said; "but I was in such trouble when you came here, and have been in such a sad dream ever since, that I fear I have neglected my duty. But if ever you want a friend, come to me. Now, you must say good-bye to my sister and children."

Mr. Raven led Lachlan into a small dining-room, where were Miss Raven and three little girls, one of whom was receiving a music-lesson from Miss Eagles.

They all shook hands with him, and wished him well. Miss Eagles put on her bonnet, and said she would walk with him.

Lachlan could not help remarking that Miss Eagles' manner to Mr. Raven was constrained, and he guessed why. The good people of Yeo, for want of better food for their minds, had been already sustaining them with a little gossip about their widowed vicar and Miss Eagles, suggesting

that there were good reasons for the lady's kind attentions to that gentleman's children.

Miss Eagles and Lachlan walked together across the fields to "The Nest."

"Lachlan," began Miss Eagles, abruptly, "I think I can trust you, and I am sure that I can ask a favour of you."

"Anything that I can do to serve you or Mr. Eagles I will do," said Lachlan.

"You are going to do what I have been longing to do for years. You are going to emancipate yourself from this place. I am glad of it for your sake, though we shall lose a friend. You will probably be knocked about the world, and in the course of your wanderings may reach London. At all events you will keep your eyes and ears open wherever you are. Will you try to find me my brother? I can give you no clue to him beyond the fact that he is a dark, handsome man, something like my father, only with less piercing eyes. Wherever he is—if, indeed, he be still alive—he is a painter. His art was his and our curse—his art and a violent temper. He was engaged to be married to Mary Bull, and I think some new attachment must have supervened, and so he never wrote to any one. Mary was lovely, like Kern Lyons, only she had a sweeter expression.

"It is absurd to say, as people do, that she died of a broken heart. People's hearts don't take twelve years to break; but she died—about six months before you came here. I tell you these circumstances that you may know what to say and do if you discover my brother. All these years I have been weekly to the post-office at Yeominster—five miles' walk, as you know—in the hope of letters, because I told him that if he was ever in a strait that it would distress my father to know of, he was to write to me, and direct 'to be left at the office.' Fancy! thirteen years of this toil! and my excuse is that I go to market!—to bring home a quarter of a pound of tea, perhaps. If I cannot go myself, I send our little maid; but that makes me so nervous and anxious that it is worse than my own fatigue. And these walks have been set down, I know, to a clandestine engagement by the goodies at Yeo. I was determined that they should not quite reckon without their host, so I have had a few private letters, mostly literary, to gratify them. It is quite a relief to have a confidant. I have never spoken of my own affairs to any one before. These weekly visits to Yeominster suggested my sending a few of my attempts at composition to a magazine that we took regularly. I suppose they were neither inserted nor read, as

I saw nothing of them. I tried again with equal success. I then tried 'The Metropolitan,' which we did not see. One day Mr. Oliver Bat lent my father a number of it, and to my astonishment I saw myself therein under my *nom de plume*, or *lettre de plume*—a Greek E.

"My father read my poem, and praised it, little knowing who had written it. This was enough for me.

"I managed to get the preceding numbers of 'The Metropolitan,' and saw myself again. I had not known previously that Mr. Bat took the magazine, or I should have discovered earlier that I was in print.

"As I had not given any address to the Editor, of course he could not, if he would, acknowledge my efforts.

"Finding that they were not considered worthless, I took courage and wrote to the Editor, under cover of my Greek initials, and said I would contribute again if he thought I deserved a trifling remuneration. I requested the answer to be directed to me, at the post office at Yeominster, giving still only the E. as my address.

"The Editor replied that he should be happy to receive my contributions, and would pay me the usual price for such as he inserted.

"During the past twelve months I have been

writing occasionally, as opportunity offered, both in poetry and prose, and all that I have forwarded has appeared, and I have been duly paid. The joy I felt at the receipt of the first guinea surpassed any joy I ever felt before or since. I at once bought my father that copy of Wordsworth that he prizes so much and was so anxious to have.

"You know that he has not much notion of how the money comes or goes, so I can devote my literary gains to him without his suspecting their source; and they have been wholly dedicated to his tastes in the purchase of books.

"This has been a great pleasure to me, but even this innocent gratification must have its ingredients of gall and wormwood; all my meagre enjoyments always have had — except indeed Aline—she has brought no bitter as yet."

"She never will," interrupted Lachlan, speaking for the first time.

"My *lettre de plume* has, I suppose, become known beyond the post office. Whether the secret was too heavy for the conscience of the officials, or whether somebody else saw the address, and watched the letter as it was given to me, I cannot tell; but that inveterate gossip, Mrs. Love, got hold of my secret correspondence with some one —a gentleman it was supposed, from the writing

—and communicated the fact to Mrs. Raven. She, dear angel, told me of it at once. I declined confiding my secret, even to her, simply assuring her that it was an innocent one. She believed me, but, if I can judge from the general manner of my employers towards me, as well as of my acquaintances, I am considered a very dangerous person.

"However, they cannot do without me, having no one else at hand who can teach their children, so I have lost nothing by their spite but my good name; and I quite agree with Shakspeare in what he says about that.

"However, I have a remedy whenever I choose to use it; but I do not mean to take advantage of it, until I have written and published a whole book. Don't look so astonished. I mean to make you my medium with the publishers some day, if you will help me."

"I will do anything in the world for you, Miss Eagles, but how a poor fellow like me can manage such a matter, I do not see."

"It will not be yet, and I have arranged it all in my own mind. You are trustworthy and true. I do not intend to make any confidant but you, so keep my secret as if it were your own; more strictly, indeed, for your own secrets you have a right to tell; mine you have no right to tell.

"Of course my father knows nothing of the gossip about my clandestine correspondent; if he were annoyed by it, I should tell him the truth at once; but people know him too well to venture a word to him against me. It will be the most glorious moment of my life when I give them to understand that I, Ellen Eagles, have been corresponding with a live Editor, and not with that imaginary hero who has been already named after every man that has ever appeared at Yeo since I was sixteen.

"Two glorious moments I have had already: the first I mentioned, the second was when I once heard Mr. Oliver Bat tell Mr. Raven that there was a capital essay on 'Gossip' in 'The Metropolitan' that would just suit the good people of Yeo. It was I who wrote it. I was helping dear Mrs. Raven to cut out patchwork at the time, and they little thought the patchwork for the quilt and the patchwork of the Essay was cut out by the same fingers.

"You, Lachlan, will write to us regularly, and tell us all that happens to you. If there should be anything to say concerning my brother, or any private intelligence whatever, direct it to E. at the post office. My brother was more than ten years older than I, and yet I was his confidante: I am nearly ten years older than you, and you are mine."

"Then it was you, Miss Eagles, who wrote all those articles in the 'Dorset Director!'"

"I shall not confide in you in that matter. That is my particular secret."

"And if you really did write them, do you believe that I am capable of doing what you foretold I should do, in them?"

"I believe you are capable of anything, and that you will overcome all difficulties, just as I mean to do and am doing; quietly, but surely."

"Thank you; you shall not be disappointed. It shall not be my fault if you do not discover your brother, publish your book and make a fortune by it, and be as happy and celebrated as you deserve. And it shall not be my fault, if I do not tread in your steps. I, too, mean to show the people of Yeo that I am not to be trampled upon."

"I am sorry you should begin to follow me in the worst part of my ambition, the low desire of shining amongst inferior minds. But I suppose it is natural to wish to be well with those we live amongst. The prophet would like to be honoured in his own country, though he never is. But we must both try to forget Yeo, and our petty mortifications, if we wish to win and deserve the highest meed of praise."

Miss Eagles and Lachlan now reached "The

Nest," and when the latter had taken leave of his friends there, he went to the Downs. He asked to wish Mrs. Rambully good-bye, and was admitted to the parlour.

"I wish you well," said that lady, "but think you are losing your position by labouring for your bread, as you propose."

"You will come back again soon, Lachlan," said Aline, with tears in her large eyes. "Mamma, may I give him this purse that I have been making for you? I will net you another."

"You can give him that, Aline. Kern has made me one already, and I do not need two."

"I am so sorry you are going, Lachlan," said Aline, the tears rolling down her cheeks.

Lachlan could not speak. He shook the offered hands, took the pretty purse, and left the room. Tears were in his eyes when he was met in the hall by Kern.

"Oh! you have been there!" she said, looking surprised. "Aline's purse, too!"

Lachlan and Kern dined with Mr. and Mrs. Bull. The old people gave him some good advice, and Mr. Bull added a guinea thereto, unperceived by Kern.

"Be'st right to try thy fortune," said the worthy farmer. "Thee'lt never do anything at Yeo, but work all day in a pewter dish; begin at

one side, and come back to the same again. Let me know if you want a pound, and shalt have it."

Mrs. Bull gave him three pairs of stockings that she had knitted for him, and the address of her son-in-law, Dr. Dove, in London. All his friends felt sure that he would go to London, wherefore, they could not say.

From the Downs, Lachlan and Kern walked to Brooklands, where the Lows lived.

As they left the farm by the garden-path, they heard a sob from Aline's bedroom, and paused a moment involuntarily to listen. The window was open, and they heard Fluke's voice say distinctly:—

"Well! Miss Aline, I should be ashamed of myself if I was you."

Aline sobbed impatiently in reply.

"Do go down to mamma, Fluke, and don't be disagreeable. Why may I not cry for Lachlan, if I like?"

Kern would have listened longer, but Lachlan walked on. As they ascended the Downs, they looked back at the farm. Aline was standing at the open window, watching them, and when they turned, she waved her hand to them again and again.

Once more, on the top of the Downs, Kern

witnessed Lachlan's emotion. He could not keep from tears.

"I suppose you are crying for Aline!" she said, satirically. "I am sure she is a weak, silly child, and not worth your tears."

Lachlan glanced at Kern, but said nothing, and they walked on in silence.

At Brooklands they found a four-o'clock tea ready for them, and Jemima in full fuss as hostess. George had gone to the Manor, to bring back as many of the family as would come to have a last evening with Lachlan.

He soon appeared, accompanied by all the party except Mr. Lyons, Kezia, and the twins.

"Father-in-law asked grandfather and grandmother, and Mrs. Fluke to come," said Jemima. "He's taken a wonderful liking to Mrs. Fluke. I say, father-in-law, have you proposed for Mrs. Fluke yet?"

"Father-in-law," was a stout, rosy, well-to-do looking man, of about fifty; who did not appear to possess much more general information than his son George, and had still less conversation: but Farmer Bull said of him that he took in everything that passed just as he did his tobacco-smoke—more of it stopped behind than people thought.

Certain it is, that he was always smoking and seldom talking, and little passed out of his lips but the results of the smoking, and a few monosyllables; though his powers of imbibing were considerable.

Brooklands was a large, rich, valley farm, and everything about it proved the wisdom of Jemima's choice.

"Now, mother, you shall see if my baking-cakes ain't as good as yours," said Jemima, as a pile of smoking cakes, buttered as they came from the oven, was put upon the table.

"Famous cakes, Mima's," said father-in-law, putting down his pipe and taking up two huge pieces of cake, which he began to eat.

"Cheer up, Lachlan," said George. "You know 'tis your own choice. Needn't go if doesn't like, eh! mother-law?"

"I'm sure I don't want Lachlan to go, George," said Mrs. Lyons, in an injured tone of voice. "You all put his going away upon me, as if I was the one to make him go. I must say it's very hard. But everybody throws the blame of everything on me always. I do think my own children——"

"Oh, mother-law, stop up, do! Let's be cheerful, for once," said George.

"And I assure you, aunt, I am going on my

own account, and shall hope to see you all again soon," said Lachlan, rousing himself.

"Cake?" said Mr. Low, handing the plate to Mrs. Lyons.

They began tea in good earnest, and did honour to Jemima's cheer.

After tea, Mr. Bull, Mr. Lyons, and Kezia made their appearance.

"Mrs. Fluke?" ejaculated Mr. Low, taking his pipe from his mouth, and looking at Mr. Bull.

"The ladies couldn't come, Squoire. Too far for my missus, and Mrs. Fluke couldn't leave hers. I'm sorry you're disappointed; but they sent their best respects."

"Oh!" said Mr. Low, putting his pipe into his mouth again.

"I should never have thought of coming, if I could have fancied you and Kezia would have come, Job," said Mrs. Lyons. "I don't very often go out to be sure, and when I do, I think Kezia might have stayed at home with the twins."

"I insisted on her coming with me," said Mr. Lyons, "and put Nanny to sit with the twins, till they were asleep."

"You don't mean to say that you left the little angels awake! Well, Kezia!"

"Now, mother-law, do 'ee stop up," said

George. "I've something to show'ee which 'll stop a woman's tongue, if anything will. No good to hinder me, Lachlan; they shall have 'em all before you leave."

George went to a cupboard that filled half of one side of the parlour, and brought forth a great many parcels of various sizes, all ticketed.

Lachlan exclaimed against his doing so, but it was useless.

"Lachlan told me to give away all these things, after he was gone," said George; "and I don't see why you shouldn't thank 'un for his presents before he goes. So, now, pick and choose, there's one a-piece for everybody. That's how he's spent his lecture-money; and dang me if I think he's kept any for his-self. There, mother-law! what do you think of that? I knew you'd stop up. A real French article! All the way from Paris. France, chief town Paris, Mima."

"My!" said Farmer Low, taking his pipe out of his mouth, to look at a green silk dress, with a violet stripe in it.

"Mother, here's a beautiful doll!" cried Rhoda.

"Look at this slap-up whip! And this!" exclaimed Mark and Luke.

"Baccy-box! thank'ee lad," said Mr. Low,

nodding, and fixing his round blue eyes on Lachlan.

"Oh! Cousin, how very kind," said Kezia, opening a handsome Bible with marginal references. "You remembered what I said once?"

"A little gold locket; what I have been longing for, always! And your hair in it!" said Kern. "Oh, thank you, Lachlan, thank you."

"And such a lovely pair of chimney ornaments!" said Jemima.

"And a drum and fife for Jacob and Esau!" said Mark, who had been unable to refrain from peeping into the twins' future possessions.

"That's cruel, Lachlan," said Mr. Lyons. "They make noise enough, already. But thank you for my handsome silk handkerchief."

"And here's a baccy-box for you, grandfather; and a needlebook for grandmother, and ribbons for all the maids, and neck-ties for all the boys. And now guess what the young scamp has bought for me."

"Murray's Grammar," said Kern, gravely.

"Not so far off; guess again."

"A spelling-book?" still without a smile.

"No, Miss Impudence; but the Lives of the Twelve Patriarchs."

A universal roar of laughter drowned the thanks which were being lavished on Lachlan.

"Well, nephew, I'm sure I'm very much obliged," said Mrs. Lyons, dejectedly. "I didn't desire it——"

"Nor deserve it," whispered Kern.

"And I'm sure I don't want you to leave us; but an invalid like me, nephew, and ten children, and so much to think of——I never saw a prettier green; I wish I had had it for Jemima's wedding."

"Do for Kezia's!" said George.

"Or Kern's!" said Mr. Bull. "When is it to be, Lachlan? You must come back a rich man and a baronet both, if you mean to have Kern; for she always said she'd marry a gentleman."

Kern's handsome face flushed, and she looked angrily at her grandfather, and moved away from Lachlan's side, where she was always to be seen when they were both in the same room.

"Don't mind him, cousin," said Lachlan, who was glad of any diversion from the presents. "A navvy would never aspire——"

"Want you," said Farmer Low, looking at George and Lachlan, and rising from his chair.

They followed him out of the room, into the adjoining hall. He went to a bureau, and unlocking it, took out a five-pound note.

"Baccy-box—Patriarch — chimney — any ob-

jection?" he said to George, pointing to the note.

"None in the world: quite right, father," said George.

"There!" said Mr. Low, putting the note into Lachlan's hand, and locking the bureau.

"Oh, Mr. Low, I cannot——" began Lachlan.

"You shall pay again when you're rich," said George, forcibly pulling Lachlan out of the room. "Don't offend the old gentleman. He always means what he says."

Again Lachlan was greeted with thanks and reproaches—the one for his presents, the other for spending his money in buying them. The children were clamorous in entreating him to remain amongst them; the elders said nothing, except Mr. Low, who repeated at intervals of tobacco-puffs, "bide — bide — rolling-stone — moss."

To which Lachlan replied by another proverb, "Nothing venture, nothing have."

CHAPTER XV.

AMONG THE NAVVIES.

In the course of a few weeks, Mr. Lyons received a letter from Lachlan; and at intervals of three, six, nine, or even twelve months, his other friends at Yeo heard from him also. I shall transcribe his letters, which, rare as they were, proved the only news his relatives ever had of him. The first was as follows:—

"Post-Office, Marketon,
"April 1st, 18—

"My dear Uncle,

"Here I am settled at last; for the present at least. I had a week's hard walking and hard living before I reached the new line. I enjoyed it, however; saw the country, and got more specimens than I could carry. I am not to forget Yeo. I was sitting down by the roadside, weary, and not in very good spirits, the

third day after I left you, when, to my astonishment, the old dog jumped upon me from behind. I only hope the friends I have left will be as faithful as the one that scented me through two counties! What were Mark and Luke about that they did not keep the old fellow shut up? I suppose he broke the rope, as he had the remains of it round his neck.

"I thought he would have smothered me; his white coat was brown with dust and dirt; but he didn't care how much of them he gave me. I was very glad to see him, and felt comforted. He was starving, so I gave him my bread and cheese, and we have been together ever since. He takes care not to let me out of his sight. How are the birds?

"But I must not lose time and paper, when postage costs so much.

"I got to Marketon at last, and heard that the railroad was about seven miles from it. I bought my tools, shouldered them, and walked on till I reached it, and saw a band of navvies at work. They were a rough lot. I inquired if I could get employment; and they said I had better ask the engineer, who was somewhere down the line. I heard them laugh, and call me a young 'un, but I went on.

"In about an hour, I saw a gentleman exa-

mining some rails that had been laid down, and heard him explaining to some men that they were badly done. He seemed angry. I halted and stood at some distance from the party, till he ceased speaking, and the men fell to work to alter the rails. I then went up to him and asked for employment. He eyed me keenly, and inquired if I were a navvy; I said, No; but that I was used to field-work, draining, and the like, and wished to learn.

"'You may go and try,' he said; 'and if I see you are up to work, you shall have it.'

"I began with a will, and shovelled away so vigorously, that, at the end of the day, when my labours were examined, I got very good wages; and from that time to this, I have been a navvy.

"I have seen some rough work in Australia, and we weren't idle at Yeo, but I never knew what work really was before.

"Tell Kern that she would admire my dress, hair, and complexion more than ever. But I have found geological specimens already that would make you laugh; and drawn a map of the country, that set my fellow-labourers wondering. It is bad enough, but I suppose it is better than they could do, and so they are more civil than they were at first. One of them got hold of it, and showed it to the rest, and asked me where

I learnt to do such things. When I said in Australia, they were all alive; and I was questioned by them just as I was at Yeo.

"The dog is a great favourite. I am so glad my poor father named him 'Yeo.' Whenever I call him, it reminds me of the pretty village and all my kind friends.

"This is a lonely place. There is not a town or village nearer than Marketon, and most of us are too tired to walk there after our day's work. A middle-aged man, Stern by name, for whom I was able to do some little service, is lodging at a cottage about a mile from where we are labouring, and he shares his room with me. I didn't like it at first, but I have got used to it now, and one must put up with strange bed-fellows.

"He is a north countryman, and I can scarcely understand him. Perhaps this is lucky for me, as he lectures me nightly, when I sit up to work those 'ridiculous problems,' as Kern used to call them. Remind her of her promise of writing to me. A letter would be a great treat in this solitude; for solitude it is, although peopled by navvies. They do not understand me, and I do not understand them, as yet; but we shall know one another better before we part, I dare say. Something always turns *up* to prove that all men are brethren; though Stern and I learnt the lesson

by his tumbling *down* and nearly breaking his leg.

"Give my love to my aunt and cousins, and my best respects to my friends at the Downs and the Nest. I shall write to Mr. Eagles when I have anything worth writing about. The moon is shining in upon me whilst I write, just as she used to do at the old Manor, or in our Australian tent. I thought of you all when I was at church this morning. I walked to Marketon for service—to the great amusement of most of my companions, who, if they went so far, went, I fear, to the ale-house. I tried to persuade some of them to go with me, but they only shouted and called me names. Tell Kezia that I had some difficulty in keeping down my temper and my fists; but for once I did.

"I hope the twins are well, and George and Jemima. Remember me to them and to Mr. Low, most gratefully, and believe me to be,

"Your dutiful and affectionate nephew,

"LACHLAN LYONS."

About six months after the receipt of the foregoing epistle, Mr. Eagles received the following:—

"Sunley,
"September 29, 18—

"My dear Sir,

"As my cousin Kern told me that you had read my first and last letter, I need not repeat what I said therein. We have worked our way from Marketon towards Sunley, a pretty village with a post-office, about five miles hence. We are now near a scattered hamlet, where we get food and lodging pretty reasonably. My good friend Stern sticks to me, and in his fatherly interest, insists on my continuing to share his room, and all this because I broke his fall, instead of his breaking his leg.

"I am raised to the office of quarryman. We are cutting through rock! and such rock! I can scarcely stick to my work for searching for all sorts of petrefactions. Preadamite, whatever you may say against the new theory.

"But I am not going to write about theories, though mine has brought me some luck. About two months ago I was examining a fossil that I had turned up, when Mr. Parker came near me. It was dinner-time, so I was not idling. He noticed what I was looking at, questioned me about it, and, I suppose, was surprised to see that a navvy knew anything of geology. He has

a very small smattering of it, and kindly told me what I knew very well already; but of course, I listened to his rudiments. Don't think me vain, but they were only the rudiments.

"Stern came to listen, and spoke up for me. I would rather he had let it alone, but the upshot of it was, that Mr. Parker lent me some books—rudimentary, of course, but very useful. Ever since, I find that he has his eye upon me, although he does not take any particular notice of me; indeed it would not do amongst so many men, who would soon be jealous of me.

"My comrades soon found out that I could write, and I am therefore become secretary to the navvies. I write their letters, and sometimes settle their accounts. Miss Eagles would be amused at the love-letters I write. Never having read many novels, I had no idea what people said before; and then I read the answers! Wasn't it the Saxons who believed figures to be too difficult for the human mind?

"Well! some of my unmathematical friends look upon me as a prodigy because I do their sums 'in my head.' My few talents are making me a reputation, and I am trying to follow Cousin Kezia's good advice—of not letting them be wholly selfish. She used to say that I thought of nobody and of nothing when I was reading or

writing; so, like you, my dear sir, I am going to be unselfish if I can.

"I was thinking one evening of what there was in the world for me to do for others, and wishing that I had somebody to work for besides myself. I had not long to wish. All my wishes get accomplished in a moment, in the most singular ways. A young man came to me and said, abruptly enough,

"'I wish you'd teach me to write, man.'

"'With pleasure,' said I.

"And then and there I gave him his first lesson.

"In spite of hard work and late work—for during the fine long days, we often worked after hours—my pupil's big, rough hand made wonderful letters every night. By degrees he got on so well, that Stern was astonished, and held me up as a writing-master as well as geologist. I had soon plenty to do for others as well as myself.

"Several of the men asked me to teach them, and I have now quite a large writing-class.

"One thing weighed upon my mind from the first. I could not bear to see my companions drink, and to hear them curse and swear on Sunday; so I made those I taught to write on the week-day evenings, promise that they would come and read with me on the Sunday evenings.

This was to be the condition and payment. They called me an odd chap, and laughed at me; but I stood firm, and they gave in. Stern asked me what put such things into my head. I was puzzled to answer him, for they came there—I don't know how. But it removes the weight of loneliness from one's mind, to feel that one is of some use in the world.

"If I had my 'specimens' here, I think I should be inclined to go over our lectures on Australia, for the men are wild about emigration; and many who have wives and families elsewhere, talk of going out. But this would seem presumptuous, perhaps; though I would only say what I have said before.

"Last Sunday afternoon it was so fine and warm that we had our reading out of doors. I suppose the force of custom took us to the railroad, for thither we went.

"From the rocks that I mentioned before, there is a fine view, and we navvies, rough as we are, love Nature. Seated upon the pieces of rock, blasted or hewn down; with a background of rock, and a foreground of meadow-land, wood, and water, on which the sun was shining brightly; ten or a dozen of us were assembled. Stern, who has a good voice, and is a good man I think, led the evening hymn, in which as many as

could, joined. Singing is not my forte, as you very well know, so I didn't venture.

"Whilst they were singing, I saw Mr. Parker and another gentleman at a distance, stopping to listen, as it seemed to me. When the hymn was finished, we sat down, and I began to read a portion of the Church service. I suppose there is no harm, though I am not a clergyman; I wish I could ask Mr. Raven. I used his prayer-book.

"I could not help thinking of similar scenes in Australia, when my poor father assembled still wilder-looking men on the Sunday, for a similar purpose. My friends were dressed, as was I, in clean smock-frocks, and were as solemn as if I had been really a preacher, and in my pulpit.

"We were reading the Psalms for the day, verse about—for most of them could read, and some had prayer-books—when Mr. Parker and his companion passed us. We stopped and touched our hats.

"Mr. Parker, who is always in a hurry, and has his profession in his eyebrows as well as his heart, just touched his hat, and would have gone on had not his friend paused.

"I do not think that I have ever mentioned that Mr. Parker is not the head engineer,

but the one appointed for this particular portion of the line. His companion was Mr. Markman, the chief; but I did not know it at the time.

"This gentleman stopped, looked at us, and turned back. We did not go on reading, but when he saw what books we had in our hands, he begged us to proceed, and asked to be allowed to join us.

"Of course I got up, offered him my book, and asked him to be good enough to continue the service. At first he seemed inclined to refuse, but I suppose he thought that I was frightened, as I was, and therefore took my book. He was parson now, and I clerk. Mr. Parker remained, much against his will, I think.

"Mr. Markman read the rest of the service as well as a clergyman, and then said that, having so good an opportunity, he should like to add a little lay sermon to the very salutary reading we had had.

"Just then some more navvies came up, bent, I believe, on ridiculing us, but seeing Mr. Markman, they stood quietly by.

"He made us all a very plain and interesting address. There was nothing personal in it. He simply said that he was pleased to have found us

so profitably engaged, and to be able to speak to us as a friend; he who, from circumstances and press of occupation, rarely came in contact with us. He then gave us all some sound practical advice upon our duties to God and to one another, and said that he should be glad to be put into the way of furthering our spiritual wants, as he hoped he was always ready to assist us temporally.

"When he had said this, he looked round inquiringly. I scarcely know how or why it was, but most of my companions pointed to me. He was coming to speak to me, when Mr. Parker looked at his watch, and said that he was afraid they should be late for dinner. The word 'dinner' was electrical, and something about 'Sir John' was the thunderclap.

"They nodded, and hurried away; and so a baronet and his dinner spoilt my chance of speaking, and being spoken to, by one of the greatest engineers in Europe. I wished all the baronets in England, myself included, and all the dinners in England, my own included, extinct, when, after they were gone, I heard who he was.

"However, the following morning there came a large parcel of religious books, copy-books, and the like, directed to me, for distribution amongst

the navvies. I hope I was not very wicked, but I wished them with the baronets and the dinners. All the men laughed when they took the books, and said many queer things.

"Stern thought Parker, who is not a favourite with the men, was at the bottom of it, and wished Mr. Markman had given them a good dinner instead of all those tracts and copy-slips. For my own part, I was angry because I wanted engineering books, and had been done out of speaking to Mr. Markman. But he looked well at me, and I hope he will remember me if we ever meet again. He has such a pair of eyes, and such a remarkable face. Ugly enough, but so full of intelligence. Parker, on the contrary, is handsome, but lacks the quick, keen expression that seems to cut you through.

"We have had some bad weather lately, and this foggy, damp climate gives one cold and bad temper. You can cure everything, my dear sir; can you give me a receipt for these English complaints? I never had them in Australia. Poor old Stern, too, has a cough that keeps him awake half the night, and he says he wishes he could turn a tract into a mixture. If we are ailing from September rains, what shall we be at Christmas?

"I must conclude this long letter, by begging

to be remembered to all my friends; and hoping that it will find you and Miss Eagles well, I remain,

"My dear Sir,

"Yours with sincere respect,

"LACHLAN LYONS."

CHAPTER XVI.

MR. OLIVER BAT'S SUSPICIONS.

About a month after the receipt of Lachlan's last letter, as Miss Eagles was on the Downs, hurrying home from her morning work at the farm, she met Mr. Oliver Bat. As she saw him approaching, she reasoned thus with herself—

"I have a great mind to pass him by. He never comes near us now; and I believe he is half in love either with that child Aline or with that woman Kern, for he is always maundering about these Downs, either on horseback or on foot. That is just as he used to do after me years ago. And he is such a precise-looking, twinkling-eyed, clever, satirical, red-whiskered, impenetrable, provoking——"

The soliloquy was cut short, as Miss Eagles was hurrying past Mr. Oliver with a majestic bow, by that gentleman's calmly exclaiming—

"What a hurry you are in, Miss Ellen! Pray

stop a bit, I want to speak to you. Won't you shake hands? How have I been so unfortunate as to offend you? I suppose you learnt your new manners from the German mystics."

"Where have you learnt your new manners, Mr. Oliver?" asked Ellen, stopping to speak to him.

"I am going to walk with you, if you will allow me. I am charged with a secret, of which I must discharge myself as soon as possible."

Miss Eagles blushed.

"Your father showed my brother that young Lyons's letter, and allowed him to bring it home to us. We are all interested in the youth, particularly Nicholas; and we want you to enclose him a ten-pound note, to buy him some engineering books, which he seems anxious to get."

"Thank you, Mr. Oliver; this is very kind. I will do what you ask."

Mr. Oliver gave Miss Eagles the note. They walked on together for a few minutes in silence, until they came to the old Roman encampment, before alluded to.

"Have you half an hour to spare, Miss Eagles?" said Mr. Oliver, stiffly and abruptly. "I particularly want to speak to you."

"Pray speak on, Mr. Bat, I listen," replied Ellen, slacking somewhat her ever rapid pace.

"Would you mind sitting down here? I cannot talk when I walk; and you really race, Miss Ellen."

"Why not come to the 'Nest?' You may talk at your ease there."

"No; everybody listens everywhere. You have a little maid who is sure to listen. I am afraid to speak above my breath in my own library, the servants listen so abominably."

"Have you so many secrets?"

"Of course I have. Don't you think we three bachelor brothers have plenty of *tendresses* to pour out to one another? But, seriously, you must sit down here, where we can see everyone that approaches, for a mile off, at least; and where none but the small birds are likely to listen."

Mr. Oliver led Ellen to a mound of the encampment, and when she sat down he seated himself by her side. She averted her face from him, in order that he might not see how very red she was.

"Miss Eagles," he began, and paused. "Ellen! we are old friends. I have known you from a child. I feel a great interest in you and your father. Whenever I have it in my power I speak well of you both, and defend you, if any one says a word against you."

"I am sure we ought to be much obliged and flattered by your speaking *of* us, for you never speak *to* us," said Miss Eagles, her black eyebrows suddenly meeting and her eyes flashing.

Mr. Oliver smiled.

"I am now going to speak both *of* and *to* you; and you must forgive me if I say anything to annoy you; and believe that the strongest interest could alone make me speak at all."

"Pray speak out, Mr. Oliver; you frighten one to death with this long preamble."

"I will speak out. Your name is mentioned in this village and neighbourhood of Yeo in a manner derogatory to your position and education as a lady."

"Is that all? Do you detain me thus to tell me what I know already? Pray let me go on."

Miss Eagles attempted to rise, but Mr. Bat detained her.

"All!" he continued, hastily, forgetting his usually somewhat formal manner in an unusual excitement. "All! Do you call it nothing for a woman's name to be bandied about by village gossips and boors, and made a jest of by those who are jealous of her? Nothing to be reported to be carrying on a clandestine correspondence by initials with some unknown man, who answers by initials? Ellen Eagles! I know to a cer-

tainty that this is the case. I know that you have been writing for some years, at intervals, now becoming shorter, to some one who answers you; that it is without your father's knowledge; that you and your confidante, the ridiculous little maid, are perpetually to and from the post office; and that you run the risk of losing your reputation as a prudent, well-conducted woman."

"And pray how have you discovered this marvellous romance, Mr. Oliver Bat?" said Miss Eagles, turning her black eyes and knitted brows upon that gentleman.

"By questioning the postmaster, and bribing the immaculate little maid, Miss Ellen Eagles," replied Mr. Bat, fixing his twinkling orbs upon the handsome face, now pale as twilight.

"And you dare to confess this to me?"

"I do. Before I could deny the facts that were canvassed in my hearing, I must have proof that they were false. I sought for proof and found they were true. I can now only leave that company in which I hear your name aspersed. Can you, and will you clear up this mystery?"

Ellen bit her lip; but was silent.

"You cannot, or will not. At first I believed you were writing to your brother—fully gave you credit for it; but, when I saw the letter, I knew that the writing was not his."

"Saw the letter! You dared to open——"

"No; not to open your letter, though I longed to do so. I only saw the address."

"Mean! cowardly!" cried Miss Eagles, tears springing to her eyes. "What right had you to question the postmaster—tamper with my servant?"

"The right of friendship—of——"

"Friendship! If you can believe me guilty of the things you hint at, I am not worthy of your friendship or you of mine. I renounce it."

"Then you are not guilty? You can tell me why, and with whom you carry on this correspondence?"

"Wherefore should I tell you? Have you been so kind and so friendly for the last three or four years, that I am to make *you* my confidant? Is the woman whose name is bandied about Yeo, as you express it, because she corresponds with one man, to make herself still more conspicuous by holding private verbal communications with another?"

"Oh, Ellen! if you knew *why* I am thus interested in you, you would not speak so bitterly."

Ellen's blood again flushed up under the clear olive skin.

"Mr. Oliver, I don't understand the sort of in-

terest you profess to take in me. When I am interested in a person—am a friend in short—I don't forsake that person and her relations, without good reason. I know the difference of station that exists between us——"

"Hush! hush! don't offend me by such words. Don't misjudge me. Your brother and I were friends. I esteem your father — I —I— have loved you, Ellen, ever since you were a child."

Ellen's face softened, and her eyes gleamed with something between a smile and a tear.

"So you used to tell me," she said, more gently than she had spoken before, "when I was a little girl, and you were so kind to me; but, you have ceased to care for me for a long, long time."

"Hear me, whilst I tell you why I have seemed to cease to care for you. As a child and young girl, you were wild and wilful enough, but gentle and teachable when spoken to. As a woman, you are cold, hard, unapproachable; always on the defensive, impatient of advice or control, as at this present moment, un——"

"Thank you, that is enough," said Ellen, rising, her face again firm, fixed and pale as marble. "I now perfectly understand why you are so changed. I am sorry that circumstances, a hard life, and a harder world, should have made

the woman *not* daughter of the child. I am glad to know all this, and I shall now wonder no more."

A sound like a sob accompanied the last words, and she turned to go away.

"You must not leave me yet," said Mr. Oliver, laying his hand on her arm, as he too rose from his seat. "If I seem harsh and unkind, it is because the love I bore for the child makes me madly anxious about the reputation of the woman. If the man you love cared for your fair fame one thousandth part as much as I do—your old bachelor friend—he would not allow you to write to him under feigned initials, and so lay you open to the scandal of such a place as Yeo. By heavens! I wish I had him here, at this moment! I'd teach him to trifle with a woman's honour."

Mr. Oliver's eyes twinkled as Ellen had never seen them twinkle before, and his face grew as red as his whiskers.

"No man should ever dare to trifle with me, Mr. Bat," said Miss Eagles. "I suppose I ought to be obliged to you for this interest, as you call it; but I would rather have one grain of faith in me than a hundredweight of such doubting interest. I am thankful to have one person in the world who will trust me—who will be quite sure

that hard, cold, unapproachable, impatient of control, as I may be, and doubtless am, I could never be guilty of one single action that could add one more grey hair to his already bending head. God help us, if our friends turn against us!"

"I repeat, that it is because I love you, Ellen Eagles——"

"Loved me as a child, despise me as a woman. I reject the love, or friendship, or interest, or whatever name you choose to give your feelings for me, with scorn. If I have so conducted myself as to deserve the hard names you have used to me, you are wrong to be my friend; if I have not, you are wrong, a thousand times wrong, to doubt me."

"Ellen, I am more than a friend; I tell you that I love you, in spite of these appearances against you; that if they were cleared up I would ask you to be mine—I would brave the opinion of the world—I would——"

"You! would — condescend — to the poor schoolmistress—the poor schoolmaster's daughter ——the woman whose reputation is at stake!—the hard—cold—unapproachable Ellen Eagles! Thank you. But I will not condescend, Mr. Oliver Bat, to marry any man who has not a perfect faith in my honour, honesty of purpose, and truth. A faith that will believe in

spite of appearances, and love through life to death."

Miss Eagles was to be detained no longer. She snatched her arm from Mr. Oliver's grasp, and moved rapidly away. He looked after her, but did not attempt to follow her. He stood gazing, until she was out of sight, and then he sat down on the seat she had left, and ruminated. Had he spoken his thoughts aloud, they would have been nearly as follows:

"Love through life to death, I may and shall, Ellen Eagles; for I love you as I have never loved mortal woman; but, believe against appearances that you do not choose to explain, I neither can nor will. Nor would I, though I were half beside myself for your sake, marry you, if you would have me, whilst a doubt of your good name remained upon my mind. My wife must be pure as the whitest snow. Brusquerie, originality, rudeness—even strong-mindedness curtness and singularity, I have got over; nay, I love her the better for them, in spite of my inclination to hate such things in woman; but deceit and a clandestine correspondence, never! And yet it was when I first heard of this correspondence, that I found out how dearly I loved her. I nearly knocked down the whole family of Loves and Daws, when they be-

gan to discuss it three or four years ago. And all these years I have been watching, doubting, distrusting, and imagining,—until I have grown more of a cynic than ever. I have tracked her admirers to and from her door, and rejoiced to see poor young Lyons depart for Australia. I have haunted her pupils, till that lovely Kern begins to look upon me as her swain. I have tried to rouse her jealousy, by paying attention to that sickly Margaret Ann, and that worthy but gaunt Miss Raven. I have palpably neglected both her and her father; and finally, I have stooped to question a postmaster and bribe a wretched little maid-servant. Oh! potent love! the same from the days of your mother Venus to these present ones, making of an Achilles a spinster, and of an Oliver Bat a meaner man than he thought himself. And all because of what? Because Ellen Eagles is—is—is just what she is; different from all other women. I would rather see her beetling brows frown at me fiercely as I did to-day, than be smiled at by the sunniest damsel in the country. I would rather hear one sharp sentence from her original mind, than listen to all the sweetnesses of all the honey-bees of the female hive—still I would not marry her unless—. But I needn't worry my mind on this head, as she has pointedly

refused me; still she was vexed, evidently vexed, by my change of conduct and manner. But no matter, I am now an old bachelor for life; so back to my study and the consolations of literature. Heaven bless old Caxton, and Laurentius, and all the rest of 'em—But no! out upon 'em all! I wish I was a monk, and had a whole gospel to write out. And then I suppose I should forget Ellen Eagles."

Just as Mr. Oliver Bat's naturally scholarly mind was about to descend from the Eagle flight, to a dissertation on monasteries and printing, Aline and her pony, followed by a brisk little terrier, appeared on the brow of the hill.

As the terrier had been a present from Mr. Oliver to Aline, the dog knew his former master, and ran towards him. He expressed his recognition by such barks, jumps, and yelps as terriers will make use of, whether they are welcome or no; and Mr. Oliver was forced to notice him. Aline, too, was soon at his heels, and Mr. Oliver was forced to notice her also.

"Have you seen Miss Eagles, Mr. Bat?" said Aline. "I was just going to try and overtake her, for she says she can walk as fast as my pony canters."

"So I should think," growled Mr. Bat.

"Oh! should you? What has Max got in his mouth? It looks like a letter. Give it up, Max, I say, give it up."

Aline was vainly attempting to make her dog fetch and carry. The said dog had been named "Max" by Mr. Oliver in remembrance of a dispute that had taken place between him and Miss Eagles, concerning Max Piccolomini and Thekla.

"Give it up, sir," said Mr. Oliver, in a tone that made Aline start and Max drop the paper and run away.

Mr. Oliver picked it up, and found it to be the ten-pound Bank of England note intended for Lachlan Lyons, which Miss Eagles had dropped in her excitement.

A sudden thought seemed to strike him.

"You are going after Miss Eagles, Miss Rambully; this belongs to her. Will you give it to her from me? You are to be trusted, I know.

He looked into the girl's loving and loveable eyes, as she said "Yes," and sighed. Different as was their expression, they were dark, and somehow they reminded him of Ellen's when she was fourteen.

He took out a pocket-book, tore out a sheet of paper, and wrote the following lines:—

"You have dropped the enclosed, Ellen. You

will still send it to the boy, I know. No personal pique will prevent your doing a kindness. Forgive my late impertinence; I shall not remind you of it by my presence. I think I shall go abroad. May you be happy with ——, whomsoever he may chance to be. A faithful friend is the most tiresome, unbearable, intrusive, inquisitive creature in creation, and Oliver Bat is one."

Mr. Bat folded the note in this paper, and gave it to Aline. She had watched him while he was writing it, and did not like the expression of his countenance.

"If it is not kind, Mr. Bat," she said, simply, "I would rather not take what you have written to Miss Eagles."

"Why?" said Mr. Oliver, glancing hastily at Aline.

"Because she is often very sad, and I would not wish to make her sadder."

"Do you think anything I could say would make her sad, Aline?"

"I think it might. She told me you were very kind to her when she was younger, and then she loved you very much. I could not bear that any one I loved should be unkind to me. It would give me pain at my heart."

"No one could ever be unkind to you, sweet

child. But I will add one line to my note, to make you happy, and to assure Miss Eagles that I feel towards her just as I did when she was younger. Will that do?"

Again Aline watched Mr. Oliver as he wrote, and this time the expression of his face pleased her. His additional line was as follows :—

"Ellen, I have 'a faith that believes, in spite of appearances, and will love through life to death.'"

Those last words had remained stereotyped in Mr. Oliver's mind, and he simply transcribed them.

"You will be kind enough to give the note to Miss Eagles," he said, "and tell her that the enclosure is what she herself dropped."

Aline nodded, and cantered off followed by Max, barking and capering.

As she did not overtake Miss Eagles, she ventured to ride on to the Nest. She was an expert rider, and opened the gate into the road with the crook of her whip, and was at the little green gate in a few minutes.

She got off her pony, tied it to the gate, and went to the cottage. No one was visible—no one answered to her knock. The door was open, and she went into the passage, and thence to the parlour—thence up stairs to Miss Eagles' room. She tapped at the door.

"Go away, Jenny, I will never see you again," said a hoarse voice from within.

"It is I, Miss Eagles—Aline."

"Stop one moment, Aline," said the hoarse voice again.

Shortly the door was opened, and Miss Eagles appeared, her face stern and pale, but with traces of tears upon it.

"You dropped something on the Downs, Miss Eagles, and Mr. Oliver Bat asked me to give it to you. Will you just see that it is right?"

The dark brows met as Miss Eagles opened the note, and saw the writing.

"It is all right, Aline; thank you. It is a ten-pound note that they have begged me to send Lachlan to buy him books."

"I am so glad! But will you not read the note? Mr. Oliver says he is just as fond of you as ever he was; and so you have not lost your friend."

"You and Mr. Oliver appear to be on wonderfully intimate terms, Aline. But, child, you must never come here again—never! No shadow of the stain they throw on me must fall on you. Go, Aline! go! Keep to your mother, your innocent pursuits, your simple heart, and do not leave the Downs Farm, for all the love that all the world could offer."

"I never mean to leave it, dear Miss Eagles, and I never mean to leave you either. But I will go, as you wish it."

Aline kissed Miss Eagles, and lingered with her arm round her neck. Miss Eagles suddenly threw her arms round the young girl, and sobbed. Then recovering herself, opened the door, and gently impelled her from the room.

Aline went, wondering, and half weeping, to her pony. She found Jenny holding it.

"Oh! Miss Rumbully, Miss Rambully!" cried the little maid, as Aline came through the gate. "Her'n a deazed me a moast. Her as zent me awây. Doo'e goo and ax parding vor me, Miss, please. I shall drown'd myself, I shall. And missus a' been zoo kind to veather and mother, and all! And I never meaned no wrong. And Measter Bat be zuch a grand genleman, It warnt bezeemen to zay 'ee shouldn't 'ave a look at the letter. Zummet 'll kill me if I do peart vrom her. Her zaid her'd never zet eyes on me agen. Oh dear! Oh dear!"

Jenny's sobs and cries were so loud, that Aline was frightened.

"Ax her to vorgive me, Miss, or uch'll drowned myself. An' mother 'll kill me a moast."

The sobs and cries brought out Miss Eagles.

"Jenny, I ordered you to go home, and never to let me see you again," she said.

Jenny fell on her knees, and clasped her hands, crying—

"Uch'll drowned myself vust,—Mother 'll wollop me to death,—veather 'll goo an' get drunk,—an' yo' zed uch ud go. Uch 'll never do it no moare! Oh! Miss Ellen, Miss Ellen!"

"Do, dear, dear Miss Eagles, forgive her," pleaded Aline, glancing into Miss Eagles' face.

She did not need to look twice. The evil spirit had departed, and there was a calmer light in the lately flashing eyes, and the frown of the knitted brows was gone. She was sure that the words written by Mr. Oliver had been read with some degree of satisfaction. She mounted her pony, and rode off, leaving Jenny to plead alone.

Miss Eagles told the little maid to get up, and return to the house, which she did as fast as she could, saying—

"Thank 'ee, Miss—bless 'ee, Miss. I'se goo and look ta beans. Measter must want zummet t' eat. Miss be a temper zure enough, but 'tis soon owver. Dang themmy letters! If so be nobody didn't larn to write, oone shouldn't be werrited zoo."

CHAPTER XVII.

LACHLAN'S LETTERS.

"Sunley, Nov. 2, 18—.

"DEAR MISS EAGLES,

"I am in receipt of your kind letter, and half of a Bank of England note for 10*l*., No. 2560. Will you be good enough to offer my best thanks for it to the gentlemen who sent it to me? I shall hope to buy the books on engineering as soon as I have an opportunity, and am very grateful to those who enable me to do so. As you require an immediate answer, you will, I hope, excuse a short letter. I am very much obliged to you for yours, and will endeavour to attend to all you say in it. I was very glad to find that Mr. Raven does not disapprove of my Sunday readings, and that Mr. Eagles recommends me to repeat my lectures.

"I had begun them when your letter arrived. I had told my friend Stern of my attempts at

Yeo, and he mentioned the subject to my fellow-workmen, who all came in a body to ask me to go through them again.

"Having got used to these men and their ways, I was not nervous, as I was at Yeo, so I promised at once, and set to work to improve and enlarge the notes I have with me.

"We hired a large barn, and there, after work, I have repeated the first three lectures with 'unparalleled success,' as the papers say. Many of the country people round have attended, at the particular request of our landlady, who is proud, it seems, to have so unusual a character as a navvy lecturer in her cottage.

"Tell Mr. Eagles that I find my words and ideas flow much more readily amongst these unlearned men than I did in my grander lecture-room in your village.

"The men come up and shake hands with me with all their hearts, slap me on the back with all their might, and pay me wonderful compliments. Now we fully understand one another, and I find that the navvies are much the same sort of people at bottom as the Australian emigrant or the Dorsetshire labourer, only perhaps more alive to improvement than either.

"I am particularly requested to give a lecture on my private history; but this I decline. I

am not quite sure that the pride of the Manor would brook a navvy connection; and I am sure the baronetcy would suffer.

"I have heard no more of Mr. Markman. We shall soon have completed this part of the line, and I shall hope to get work on another. The pay is not bad, and a sober man may live very well upon it, and save against winter or a rainy day. But few of these men are sober. It is, however, some satisfaction to me to find, that weak as my endeavours are, they keep them, for the time at least, from drunkenness, and give them an interest in self-improvement. A clever practical man might do much for them, though I believe they listen to me with all the greater pleasure, because I am one of themselves, and wear a smock frock.

"But I feel years older during the nine months I have been at this work.

"I picked up a copy of Shakspeare the other night at Sunley, cheap. I never read the plays before, and *you* can imagine with what wonder and admiration I am filled. I can't help quoting them in my lectures; and some night I mean to read out one to my friends. Stern says I am going play mad, and shall turn strolling player, which all young men of my sort do. I ask him of what sort I am, and he shakes his head.

"Poor fellow! his cough makes him very weak, and I have been obliged to work for two the last week.

"Will you give my best respects to Mr. Eagles, and my duty and love at the 'Farms?' I hope Mrs. and Miss Rambully are well.

"Again thanking you and the Mr. Bats, I remain,

"Dear Miss Eagles,

"Your greatly obliged,

"LACHLAN LYONS."

Some months after the receipt of the preceding letter, Kern Lyons received the following:—

"Sunley, April 4, 18—.

"MY DEAR COUSIN,

"I ought to have written to you, in answer to your letter, long ago, but I had nothing to write about. Now that this branch of the line is finished and opened, and I am idle for the present, I must try to make you a proper return for your letter.

"It reached me on Christmas Day, and cheered me more than I can possibly tell you. I saw all Yeo at a glance, from my great-aunts' big bonnets to Miss Love's ringlets. I burst out laughing so heartily that poor Stern begged

me to read the letter to him; and I did, and he laughed too. He was ill in bed, and I ate my bit of Christmas dinner at his bedside. It was not a 'merry Christmas,' like the previous one at Yeo; but your letter was a sunbeam.

"I am very glad to hear that Matthew is getting on in Australia. I thought he would. He is doing more there than I am here, for I am at a standstill—I 'stand and wait.'

"Also, will you wish George and Mima joy of their son and heir for me? I dare say he is quite as handsome as you make him out to be. How does 'Squoire Low' like having a baby?

"I hope Mr. Oliver Bat is returned from his travels. You seem quite to regret his absence. I am afraid I shall not have a very satisfactory account to give him of the ten pounds.

"But I must go back and relate my adventures since I received that generous gift.

"My last letter to Miss Eagles was in November. I went on working and lecturing, reading and teaching writing nearly all the winter. I enjoyed it very well whilst the work lasted; but it grew slack from bad weather, and there came a sort of strike, owing to a failure of one of the contractors.

"The paymaster had hard work to keep his head on his shoulders, because, for some weeks,

he had no money to pay. Nothing but tickets for food or drink, which the men didn't like, and which the shopkeepers dishonoured.

"I believe I was the means of stopping a riot by a real extempore lecture. I don't know how it came into my head, but a sermon I preached, and my hearers so far attended as to say, 'the chap's right, and the agent ain't got nothen' to do wi' it,' and so we subsided at last. The contractor got through his difficulties; the weather improved; work began again; and part of the arrears was paid.

"But my ten pounds were gone, as you may suppose. I couldn't keep it in my pocket, or think of engineering books, when Stern was ill in bed, and half my companions starving. I am sure I thanked the Mr. Bats for their gift a thousand times. It was the means of gaining me a hearing when the men were going to mob the paymaster—for if I had not helped some of them, they would not have listened—and it also enabled me to give poor Stern a helping hand during his illness.

"But I must try to tell my story regularly.

"During one of my lectures—that one upon the habits of the natives, that you liked the best—Mr. Markman came to the lodging of one of the men ostensibly to make some inquiries about a

bridge that was beginning to sink. The man was in the lecture-room, *alias* barn, and the woman of the cottage directed Mr. Markman thither.

"Fortunately for me, I did not see him come in. How should I? We had only two farthing candles at the top of the room, and all the bottom of it was dark. So I went on talking and they listening. I flatter myself I *was* eloquent, for the men applauded with all their might, and I quoted Shakspeare with all mine.

"After I had finished, Mr. Markman came up to me, and began to ask me a great many questions. I was frightened at first, but I remembered that here was a chance of rising in the world, and answered him as well as I could.

"I think he doubted the truth of a great deal that I said, but he told me that having heard of my lectures, he had come to listen to them.

"Then Mr. Markman asked me some questions about the railway bridge that was in progress, and begged any man present to say what he thought of it.

"I knew very well that there was an error in the original plan, but did not like to say so. However, Stern said that I had been studying it, and drawing it, and planning it for some weeks. Mr. Markman proposed going to our lodgings to see the plans, and went accordingly.

"'Your fortune's made, now,' said Stern, and so I thought in my vanity.

"Mr. Markman looked over all my labours, and praised some of them. I saw he was very cautious, and, from one or two of his observations, found that he did not think my plans were original. He liked the maps the best. I was greatly elated when he began to talk to me, but was as much pulled down before he left. However, he told Stern that he should not forget me if he had an opportunity of helping me; and this was something.

"The next day he came again, and took me with him to the bridge. You would not understand, were I to tell you, how an iron suspension bridge may sink after it has been put up; but there had been mismanagement here, and any one but the sort of pig-headed fellow Parker is, would have seen it. I told Mr. Markman what I thought about it, and he thanked me, and said I was right.

"Orders were given to alter the bridge, and from that day I could see that Parker hated me, and did all he could to get rid of me.

"I heard no more of Mr. Markman, and, indeed, soon forgot all about him in my anxiety for my poor friend Stern.

"About a week before Christmas he was regu-

larly taken down: he had been ailing for a long time. He had rheumatic fever, and it was no good to struggle against it. Luckily, he had saved some money during the autumn, and so had I, and I got him a doctor and the necessary remedies. But his attack was so severe, that he is not yet able to work, though he is, I am thankful to say, getting better. He has had a hard struggle for life, and nearly three months of suffering.

"And whilst he was so ill, came the strike I mentioned before. My savings and the ten pounds soon went, as you may suppose.

"Stern suggested my trying the lectures at Sunley, at sixpence a head. I took courage, and went to the town, and interested a printer there, who not only printed me some large bills for a trifle, but managed to get me a room free of expense. He put my bills about the town, which announced: 'Lectures on Australia; by a native and a navvy.'

"They took wonderfully, and I cleared enough money, in spite of my smock frock, to keep Stern and myself, and to do something for others, till matters righted, and work began again.

"I saw that Parker was trying to find an excuse to get rid of me, upon plea of having too many hands, but I civilly pointed out to him that Stern

was dependent on me till he got better, and he let me work on, snubbing me whenever he could.

"But last Saturday this branch of the line was finally completed, and as they do not mean to carry it on further at present, we navvies were paid and dismissed. There is more work farther on, but Stern is not yet in a condition to move, and I cannot leave him. The doctor says he may be able to get away next week, when we propose looking for work.

"All the navvies, without an exception, were kind to us, and before they went away they made a little collection amongst themselves, which amounted to three pounds, and insisted on giving it to me, as a return for my lectures and lessons.

"I spent five shillings of it on a copy of Burns' Poems, in remembrance of the givers, and the rest is keeping Stern and myself.

"I think we both of us nearly cried when it was all over, and I began to feel very lonely. But it has done me good to write to you, and to feel that I have friends who will sympathize with me. I thought I should be a Whittington before this, and here I am just where I began. No: for I have lived and kept myself one twelvemonth, and learnt something. I shall not write again until I am either better or worse off.

"I do not lose hope for a moment. I shall get up the ladder yet. I feel confident of it: only sometimes, in spite of oneself, one desponds a little. If I had been Parker, and he me, I am sure I should have helped him.

"I have followed your example, and crossed this with red ink. I made out every word of your letter, your writing is so clear. You will be such an accomplished young lady soon, that you will despise your navvy cousin. I hope Mrs. and Miss Rambully are well, and still at the Downs. I think they are the only people you do not mention.

"I sometimes wish I had never left Yeo; but I could not have got on in life there, and now I am, at least, on the railroad to fame.

"With kind love to all, believe me to remain,

"My dear Kern,

"Your affectionate cousin,

"LACHLAN LYONS."

About a month after Kern received this letter, Mr. Raven went to the Manor with one he had received concerning Lachlan, which was the cause of much conjecture and consultation. It was as follows:—

"Great George Street, Westminster,
"May 3, 18—.

"DEAR SIR,

"Some months ago I fell in with a young man of the name of Lyons, a navvy on the Sunley and Marketon Line. Sudden and unexpected business called me abroad immediately afterwards, and prevented my then making the inquiries I now take the liberty of making of you. In the course of conversation, he told me that he had come from Australia to a village called Yeo, in Dorsetshire, where his uncle lived; and doubtless, as the clergyman of the place, you can obtain for me, from his relations, his present address. I find he has left Sunley, and the people at whose house he lodged do not know where he now is.

"He appeared to me to be a young man of parts, and if I could ascertain from you that he has not left his relations on account of ill conduct, I might be of some service to him.

"I heard a very high character of him from some of the men with whom he worked, and the navvies are not apt to give praise where it is not due. What I saw of him myself was also in his favour. And I am told that he nursed and supported a fellow navvy, who was ill, for some

months. But his position puzzled me, for he seemed superior to it.

"An early answer will greatly oblige,

"Dear Sir,

"Yours faithfully,

"WILLIAM MARKMAN."

Of course no satisfactory reply could be made to this letter. Mr. Raven could only say that Lachlan's relations were as ignorant of his address as was Mr. Markman, but would communicate with that gentleman as soon as they knew it themselves. He satisfied Mr. Markman concerning Lachlan's respectability and steadiness, and hoped that the time would come when his kind intentions might be carried out.

But months after months rolled on, and no news came of the wanderer.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OUR HEROINES.

"WELL, Miss Aline, I don't know what we shall do with your mamma, if she continues so restless and irritable," said Fluke one morning when she and Aline were alone together.

Aline sighed.

"If she would only go to church, I am sure she would be calmer."

"She 'asn't been haulf so well since she has taken so to Kern Lyons. I caunt bear that girl. I wish she had never come to learn with you."

"She is so clever and amusing, Fluke, that I don't wonder at mamma's liking her. She makes her forget her troubles, and her bad sight, and diverts her very much. Nobody knows how to make her laugh but Kern."

"Yes; that's true enough. She turns everybody into ridicule till she would make a cat laugh. I laughed at myself the other day, when

I went into the room suddenly, and heard her mimicking me. I dare say I'm cockney enough, but she made me fifty times worse than I am."

"You didn't mind it, Fluke, I hope?"

"Well, one don't like to be made game of to one's own mistress. I didn't care about Kern, but I did care that your mamma should allow her to do it."

"I wish mamma, or you, Fluke, would tell me why all this secrecy is necessary. I am nearly sixteen, and know nothing of my own father, except what I remember as a child of four or five years old."

"You know, Miss Aline, that I never saw him, and that your mamma has promised to tell you everything when you are of age. But I believe it would make her blind again if she went through that old story."

"But, Fluke, she is tired to death of this life. I am sure she must have relations who would be glad to see her. Why am I not to know who gave me the pony and that beautiful piano?"

"For Kern Lyons to play upon," growled Fluke. "She gets all the profit out of Miss Eagles."

"But that is my fault because I am not clever."

"You know, Miss Aline, you could play and sing as well as anybody if you chose."

"And give up walking and riding, and amusing mamma. Music and singing are not worth that."

"And a pretty tomboy you are, rioting about all over the Downs and fields, with that old dog after you; or, if you ain't rioting, teaching those dull children, or reading and talking to that crabbed, bed-ridden, old Sally."

"For shame, Fluke! I wish you wouldn't say such things. I know you don't mean them. But why will you not tell me about my father? Perhaps I might comfort mamma. At least say whether he is alive or dead."

"You are so odd, Miss Aline! You always take up with low people. There's Mr. Bull, a very good sort of man, but not the man for you to call daddy now you are nearly grown up. And that Lachlan Lyons, you were as fond of him as if he was your brother, and are just as anxious about his letters as Kern, and more so, indeed."

"Of course I am anxious, Fluke. He was very nice and very kind to me. And he is an orphan, and had no one to care for him. I am quite sure that there is no one in the world I should be so glad to see as Lachlan. I wish he would write again. It is a long time since he wrote that last melancholy letter, and nobody knows where he is."

"A navvy! and you are——"

"Who am I, Fluke? If you were to tell me —but if I were a queen that is no reason why I should not like Lachlan."

"Now do go and practice, Miss Aline. You can be scribbling nonsense drawings over all your books, and spoiling them, but you won't practice, and all your friends so musical! And you with such a pretty voice! Why, you can sing well enough to that 'orrid old Jack, or to the birds in the bower."

"You should hear me on the Downs, Fluke. You would admire my voice. The larks and I see which can sing the loudest. Oh, Fluke! I heard such a lark this morning! Now you must listen, for mamma gets tired when I talk too much of larks. The pony stood quite still—a thing he never does—and I am sure he liked the music. I saw the lark rise, and hover and poise and float, up, up, always higher and higher. I watched him till he became a little speck in the great distance, and then I lost sight of him in the clear blue sky. But still that wonderful song went on. I am sure he must almost have reached heaven, but every note was heard down here. I do not believe the songs of angels could be clearer. And it made me so happy, Fluke. I thought if the bird could fly so far, and warble so

beautifully up so high, that heaven could not be so hard to reach for us all. Poor mamma will have her sight there, Fluke, and perhaps I may see my papa."

"Really, Miss Aline, you do talk such a lot of nonsense, that it is no wonder your mamma gets tired, and likes to hear Kern's gossip about those Yeo people."

"You are very rude and provoking, Fluke. I am sure one may just as well talk of the birds, and the sky, and the flowers, as of all those stupid people that we know nothing about. But I won't tell you of any more beautiful things, you may be sure."

"Yes, yes, you will, my darling. There, kiss your poor old Fluke, and I will try to listen patiently to all your wonderful fancies."

"You are very obliging, Fluke," said Aline, laughing, "but I won't trouble you."

"There! I hear Miss Eagles! You 'ave been tearing about all this morning, and 'av'nt learnt your lessons, or practised. I wonder whether all your larks will teach you that sum you 'ad to do!"

"Do go to mamma, Fluke. You are so provoking. What can be the use of sums? I am sure I shall never want them."

Fluke went to Madam Rambully, at the sum-

mons of her bell, and Aline to Miss Eagles and Kern, who were waiting for her below.

Madam Rambully was in her bed-room. She was sitting in an easy chair, by the open window. Her long fair hair was hanging loose on her white dressing gown, waiting for Fluke's skilful fingers to plait it into its usual neat braid. The large shade was removed from her eyes, which were fixed on the Downs. The redness had disappeared from the lids, and the pupils were of a clearer white than when she first came to the farm. She fancied that she sometimes saw an object indistinctly.

"Fluke," she began, "I cannot bear this kind of life any more. At all risks I must change it."

"Very well, my lady," said Fluke. "You know you can do it directly. Your aunt said in her last letter that she should be very glad to see you and Miss Aline, and to send Miss Aline to school, provided——"

"Provided! How can I provide against that, Fluke! You know that were I again with anyone belonging to me, he would be sure to find me out. And then I should be worried and tormented to death. Even this life is better than that would be."

"And Miss Aline, my lady? Is she to be shut up in this place all her life?"

"Aline seems quite happy; I do not see that

she wishes for anything beyond her pets, and the farmers, and the poor. She is a strange girl. I wish she were more clever and amusing. She has not half the talent of Kern, and her manners are not as good. Kern's manners are perfect."

"Laws, my lady, she is as affected as a peacock, and just apes your manners; while Miss Aline is a lady by nature. Everybody says that she is the sweetest dear in the world."

"Everybody! All the farmers and their wives. I tell you, Fluke—and I beg you will not contradict me — that Kern's manners and talents are as superior to Aline's as possible."

"Well, my lady, I 'ave no objection, I am sure, if you wish it. But *I* prefer Miss Aline to that Kern Lyons, that's all I can say."

"Have the young ladies nearly done, Fluke? I should like to see Kern before she goes. She can come up here. Go and tell her so."

"Ladies, indeed!" muttered Fluke, as she left her mistress to deliver her message.

The parlour was a very different room at that period from what it was when Madam Rambully first came to the farm, neat and pretty as it was then. It was now handsomely furnished with a new carpet, easy chair, sofa, piano, pictures, ornaments—in short, everything that could add to the comfort of its invalid inmate.

When Fluke entered it, Miss Eagles, Aline, and Kern were at their studies. She gave the message to Kern, who, without glancing up from a German book she was reading, said, "Very well, Fluke," which simple words, Fluke scornfully repeated as she left the room.

As the two young girls were fast growing up into women, it may be well to describe them as they sat, on that bright June day, in the little parlour. They were seated on either side of Miss Eagles, who looked pale and thin, and by the help of dictionaries, were translating Schiller's "*Maria Stuart*."

As Kern Lyons bent over her book, or occasionally looked up at Miss Eagles to obtain the more accurate rendering of a passage, you must perforce watch her. Perfect beauty is a rare gift, and that rare gift she possessed. Aline used to say of her, that she must have had a fairy godmother, who endowed her with every personal attraction.

She was seventeen, more than a year older than Aline, and much more than a year her senior in appearance and manners. Her complexion was so fair that the large white rose then looking in at the open window was not fairer; and her hair was of such a golden brown, that the sunbeam rested upon it, as if it were come

home to its twin brother. Long ringlets fell over her neck and shoulders, brushed as smoothly as if they had never been ruffled, and rested against a cheek, slightly flushed with a pink colour.

The features were Grecian. Nobody could find a fault with their classic outline, try as they would—and everybody did try, except, perhaps, Aline, who loved beauty in everything, because it was beauty. The eyes were of the blue of those skies, that, like the rose, looked in upon the trio, and were quite as unfathomable. You watched them —you watched Kern—hour after hour—you never knew what was in her mind, or whether she meant what she was saying to you. You asked yourself what was the expression of the girl's countenance, or had she any? Yes, sometimes. What was it? Scorn. Occasionally a turn of the mouth, and a contraction of the short upper lip expressed unutterable scorn.

Her figure was as graceful as her face was beautiful; and, as Madam Rambully justly said, her manners were as ladylike as if the blood of all those ancient Lyons, baronets, she loved to think of, had centred in her, and flowed through all her veins.

Talents, too, she had, of no ordinary kind, and ambition and perseverance to use them. Miss Eagles had thoroughly enjoyed those four years

that she had spent in teaching her and Aline, at least the hours she had passed at the Downs. She was proud of Kern, and she loved Aline.

And now we will turn to Aline. At first there does not seem to be so much to say of the simple, childish-looking girl, in her white frilled pinafore, for she still wore a pinafore, either from choice or because she was used to it. But when you examined the face, and looked into the large, soft, hazel eyes, you wondered whence the attraction came that drew your love out of you and into the power of Aline. It was not beauty, though she was not deficient in beauty of feature, and possessed eminently the subtler beauty of expression. It was not talent—though there were the springs of a rare genius within her—but it was love. Aline loved every creature that drew breath, and hard-hearted must have been the individual who did not love her in return. It was love that beamed from the tender eyes: love that smiled in the sweet mouth: love that dimpled the sunburnt cheek: love that trembled in the delicate fingers ever seeking some kindred fingers: love that moved in the light step: and love that thrilled in the low, gentle voice.

Not a mawkish sentimental love, but the noble instinct of a noble nature, that had never deceived or been deceived.

At that moment she sat with one elbow on the table, and her head resting on her hand. Two large tears were slowly rolling down her face, and her lips quivered with emotion. Her eyes were fixed on Kern's bended head, as she leaned over her book, and read with fluency the farewell of Mary Stuart to her attendants, in the last act of Schiller's beautiful drama.

From the first words of the speech in which Mary divides her possessions amongst her friends to her last:

"Lebt wohl! Lebt wohl! lebt ewig wohl!"*

Aline was breathless. When Kern uttered the last "*Lebt wohl*," with an emphasis she knew well how to give—for she might have made a fine actress—Aline fairly cried.

Kern looked up and smiled. "It all happened so long ago, Aline," she said, while Miss Eagles pressed the hand that held hers, and passed her other hand across her own moistened eyes. "How can you cry now, when, under any circumstances, she must have been dead and buried nearly three hundred years? I suppose it does not much matter now whether she was beheaded or died in her bed."

"Oh, Kern!" said Aline. "But there is some

* "Farewell! farewell! eternally farewell!"

comfort in thinking that she spoke the truth when she said :—

"Ich bin viel
Gehasset worden doch auch viel geliebt."*

"Why should such a woman be 'hated,' Miss Eagles, when she was born to be so 'loved'? Why was her beauty a curse instead of a blessing?"

"Like all our misused gifts, I suppose, Aline," said Miss Eagles.

"I should like to have been Mary Stuart," said Kern, quietly, "better than any woman I ever read of. She made all men love her, and all women jealous of her, even Elizabeth."

"I think you are like the pictures of Mary Stuart, Kern," said Aline.

Kern glanced up proudly. Miss Eagles frowned.

"Aline, you flatter Kern," she said.

"I know my own face, Miss Eagles, and the pictures Aline alludes to," said Kern, gravely.

"It is well to know ourselves," said Miss Eagles. "Perhaps had Mary known herself she would not have been so unfortunate."

"*Doch auch viel geliebt*," murmured Aline, as if she were singing it.

* "I have been
Much hated but still very much beloved."

"It seems easy enough to know oneself," said Kern, "the difficulty is to know other people."

Fluke appeared at the door. "If you have finished, Miss Kern, my lady is ready for you," she said.

"Very well, Fluke, I will come. May I go, Miss Eagles?"

"Yes, Kern. But one word first. You are going to London next week. It will be a new world. Do not carry out your just expressed wish. There is nothing gained, either in queenly or private life, by making all men love you and all women hate you."

"Only 'jealous' of me! If I could carry it out they should not know that I wished it, Miss Eagles. But it is only a *façon de parler*, to dry Aline's eyes. My uncle and aunt will be very safe people. Oh! I am so thankful to be going away from this place to a civilized part of the world."

Miss Eagles could not find any more philosophy to throw at Kern. She, too, so ardently longed to go away from Yeo, and cared so little whether people in general loved or hated her, that she had only too much sympathy with the girl herself.

"Do go to mamma, Kern, she will be impatient," said Aline.

Kern went.

"Perhaps when Kern is gone, I shall be able to amuse mamma again," said Aline, thoughtfully.

"I dare say you will, Aline. When was it settled for her to go?"

"I believe Dr. and Mrs. Dove wrote again last week to invite her — she is their god-daughter, you know—and her father consented. Do you not think she will be very much admired?"

"She must be, Aline. But why do you constantly tell her how beautiful she is?"

"I cannot help it. I always feel inclined to praise everything that is lovely. I cannot help talking to the hills and fields when the sun shines upon them; or to the moon when she looks at me of a clear night. It seems so very natural to praise what one admires."

"To you, Aline," sighed Miss Eagles. "I wish we were all more natural than we are. I am afraid it is an artificial world. Even here in this lovely quiet valley, people are not what God intended them to be."

"Then I am very glad I do not know them," said Aline. "Daddy and granny and all the farm people always say just what they mean, and Mr. and Miss Raven are perfectly truthful, I think. So are the Lows and the Lyons, except,

perhaps, Kern, who likes to puzzle one; and I am sure Mr. Oliver Bat is sincere. I wonder when he will come back! Kern says he is in Italy now, and has been travelling all over the continent."

"How does she know?" asked Miss Eagles.

"Mr. Bat told her so. Every one tells Kern everything. She has a way of listening, and being interested, and putting questions that do not seem questions, which draw out people's secrets. I believe she knows more of my history from mamma than I know myself. I wish I had some of her power."

"You need not wish it, Aline. Your influence for good may be greater than Kern's."

"Oh! I am not jealous, dear Miss Eagles. As Kern is with mamma, I will put on my bonnet, and walk over the Downs with you."

As Aline left the room, there was a great uproar in the passage. Max was waiting at the door, and began to bark and frisk emphatically; Jack shrieked in his cage at the sound of her voice, and the old sheep dog made an effort at gaiety. The trio accompanied her and Miss Eagles up the hill, and as the breeze blew the long curtain of her white poke-bonnet and the corner of the pinafore, she looked but a child, surrounded by her playfellows.

When she returned from the Downs, she went direct to a large hay-field, and raked the tangled hay by the side of her daddy, with all the spirit of a professed haymaker. She continued her work until she saw Kern leave the farm, when she went to her mother, accompanied, as usual, by Fluke's reproaches, which were replied to by Mrs. Bull, as follows:

"Dear heart! Let her enjoy her innocent pleasures while she can, Mrs. Fluke. Her time of trouble will come. I saw her dancing in a viary-ring the other day, like a viary herself. And sure she needs the viaries to be kind to her, with her poor, sickly, irritable mamma, and you always so tïart with her. But I believe yours is more in the mouth than the heart."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SQUOIRE.

Shortly after Kern Lyons went to London, news once more arrived at Yeo of Lachlan, which were immediately forwarded by Mr. Raven to Mr. Markman. His letter this time was to George Low, who, on hearing his last epistle read, had written to him to invite him and Stern to Brooklands.

Lachlan's long-a-coming reply was as follows :—

"Newcastle-upon-Tyne,
"June 29th, 18—.

"My dear Cousin George—

"I was not the less obliged to you for your kind and honest wish to see Stern and me, because I took you at your word and did not write. I knew you meant what you said, and was thankful to have such a good friend to turn to in time of need. Stern begs me to thank you for him as well as for myself, which I do with all my heart.

"He is very well now, and we have been together ever since I wrote last, nearly a twelve-month ago.

"You will all be as disappointed as I am when you hear that I have not made my fortune yet, nor even got upon the road to it; though I have tramped over plenty of high roads, and worked upon more than one railroad, since I parted from you. But I am not 'muopen-like,' as you used to be about cousin Mima: on the contrary, I have enjoyed my travels very much.

"I know you hate long letters, so I am not going to give you a history of my last year. I shall only tell you, that somehow or other my lectures have carried me from place to place one half of the year, and work as a navvy has kept me the other half. Stern has worked with me and for me, and together we have seen something of life, and a good deal of England, which is a beautiful country. I scarcely know whether I like the South or the North best, but you will see by my address that I have been at the two extremes.

"Tell Mr. Eagles that I am getting bold—perhaps too bold—as I get older; but I have met with so much encouragement amongst my fellow navvies, and working men generally, that I have ventured upon other lectures, of which I shall

hope to speak or write to him some day. I have also been making geological surveys as we went along, and drawing such maps as my knowledge would allow me to do.

"Stern has a brother living at this place, with whom we are now staying. He is as hospitable as all the north country people seem to be. We came here three days ago, and as I am to lecture here, we shall remain nearly a fortnight, so I hope some of you will write to me.

"A great many people have emigrated, I am told, from hearing the 'whipper-snapper,' as the Yeo folk used to call me; I only hope I haven't done wrong in advising emigration.

"Give my love to cousin Mima, and all my friends at the Downs and Manor, and my best respects to your father. How does he like having a baby to nurse? I suppose yours is a prodigy. Be sure you make him learn the 'capital cities,' &c.

"Believe me,

"My dear George,

"Your affectionate cousin,

"LACHLAN LYONS."

"Lo'k zee, Mima," said George Low, when he had been puzzling over this letter for some time, "dang me if I can make out the chap's long words. What does he call the baby?"

"A prodigy," said Mima, who came up to her husband with a huge specimen of rosy babyhood in her arms. "And so he is a prodigy."

"Annan?" said a voice from the chimney corner.

This was a favourite word of Low, senior, because it expressed, curtly, the question, "What do you say?" and demanded a repetition.

"Lachlan says baby is a prodigy, father-law," said Mima,

"Stares like a gawk! Read"—puff—"letter"—puff, puff.

Mima, justly offended, gave the baby to George, and read the letter.

"Good lad! very"—puff, puff—"Wish un well."

"Here's Kezia, and some o' the buoys, comen up the road," said George.

Kezia shortly entered the hall, with Mark and Luke at her heels.

"We've had a letter from Kern," she said.

"And we from Lachlan," said George.

"Hurrah!" shouted the boys. "Let's see Lachlan's letter. He ain't dead and buried in his own railroad then, as mother declares he is. Let's have three cheers. Hip, hip hip, hurrah!"

"Hurrah!" echoed George, with stentorian lungs, and "hurrah" joined the Squoire from his corner.

"There! You've frightened baby and made him cry," said Mima. "'Tis you're the *gawks* I think."

"Prodigy! ho, ho,"—puff, puff—said Mr. Low.

"Read Kern's letter, Kezia," said Mima.

"No, Lachlan's first," cried the boys.

"Pretty gwâins on"—puff—"Ladies first,"—puff, puff.

"See, father-law, Georgie's walking to you," said Mima, leading her boy up to the Squoire.

"Come — gran'fer's cubby-hole," said that worthy, laying down the pipe, and taking the baby between his knees.

"Now for Kern's letter," said George; and Kezia read as follows:—

"Great George Street, Westminster,
"June 30th, 18—.

"My dear Kezia—

"As I only gave mother an account of my journey, in my first hurried letter, I must write you the details of my adventures since. Not that I have had many 'adventures.' Uncle and aunt live quietly, yet they see a great many people. You remember that I travelled from Swindon, the place where the railway begins, with a gentleman who was very polite to me.

"I was sitting in the dining-room yesterday morning, and to my astonishment, the same gentleman was announced."

"Hey!" broke in the Squoire. "Grand! ho! ho!"

"Capital!" cried Mark. "Kern all over. She used to tell Betty to announce people properly."

Kezia continued:

"He was as much surprised as I was, and bowed very politely, and entered into conversation. My uncle came in shortly after, and took him away to his study. He called him 'Sir John,' and when he was gone, I heard that he was no less a person than Sir John Nux! Only fancy my having met the Lord of the Manor, before any of the Yeo dignities! He returned from the continent last week, and came to consult uncle professionally. Of course he does not know who I am, or perhaps he would not be so very polite.

"Uncle took me to the Opera last night, and he was there. We were in the pit, but he waited for us when we came out, and spoke to me. I wish uncle had gone into the boxes. But he says they are enormously dear. Sir John was in what they call the pit-stalls. I saw that he recognized me. The men stare in London as if they had never

seen a girl in their lives before. Aunt says, that they always stare at girls who come up from the country, and I long to assure her that I do not consider myself countrified. She is rather dowdy herself compared with others in her position. We move in very good society."

"You're reading Kern's letter," said a voice from the passage, and farmer Bull joined the party. "I hope she won't lose her head."

He went into the chimney corner, sat down opposite the Squoire, took up a pipe, and began to smoke.

"Baby will be smoke-dried between you," said Jemima. Baby was playing contentedly with his grandfather's watch-chain and seals, unconscious of being in a cloud.

Kezia continued to read:

"I suppose you will like to know something about the Opera, and what I wore. My uncle would not let me put on a low dress, and my aunt said I should not wear any flowers in my hair, so I looked plain enough, amongst all the fashionable people, in a high white muslin. But I had aunt's beautiful opera cloak, which gave me some style.

"Were I to describe the singing, acting, and scenery, you would not understand my description — indeed you do not approve of plays —

but this I must say, the *tout ensemble* was enchantment. Lablache, Rubini, Tamburini, Grisi—"

"Skripe them outlandish names, Kezia; you can't read 'em," said father Bull.

It must be confessed that Kezia was stumbling sadly over them.

"Frogs! Mounseers!" puff, puff—ejaculated the Squoire.

"They are great singers," said Kezia, "but Kern says, that they sang wonderfully."

"Jump over 'em," said George.

Kezia did so, and continued:

"And whom else do you think I have seen? Bullying Bob, *alias* Ensign Love. He looks better in regimentals than he used to look in plain dress, and is quite a grand person. His London manners are very different from his Yeo manners, but he requires to be kept at a distance. I saw him at a review in the Park, and he saw me, came up and spoke to me, and called the next morning. What would 'Pa and Ma,' and 'Ringlets' say?

"A review is a magnificent sight. I think the finest thing I have yet seen are the statuesque Horse Guards, close to us. I mean to marry a soldier. An officer of course.

"Uncle is going to let me have some music

and singing lessons. I sang the other evening to a party of old people, and one of them, who was a singer, and quavered through a ballad, said I had 'great capabilities,' and so they are to be cultivated.

"I can fancy all your remarks, and the general comments of the family on this letter.

"I see Mr. Markman's offices almost every day, and fancy I must once have seen him. I longed to speak to him, but uncle does not know him. He is not acquainted with his next-door neighbour, and Great George Street is longer than all Yeo. Poor Lachlan! I wish he were with Mr. Markman. But not in his old coat, or the smock-frock he speaks of. I could not possibly notice him in those, here."

"There! Shut up, Kezia," said George Low. "Kern baint worthy to wipe Lachlan's shoes. Sir John Nux, and Bullying Bob, and all them fine Lunnon volk, be no more to our Lachlan than chalk to cheese."

"Right, boy," said the Squoire.

"Now give me the babby," said farmer Bull, who had been vainly trying to entice the child from his grandfather's seals.

"Child's a gawk!" said farmer Low, winking at Jemima, in a very animated manner.

The two old men laid down their pipes, and

each began to play with the baby, to the great delight of George and Mima, and to the discomfiture of Kezia, who still wanted to finish the letter, which, however, contained nothing further, beyond the usual complimentary concluding messages to friends.

"I have the greatest right in the baby," said farmer Bull, "for I'm his great gran'fer. Give 'im to me, Squoire."

"Gran'fer, I be—" puff, puff, said farmer Low, rattling his seals with one hand, and holding his pipe with the other.

"Fair play! fair play! You let alone the seals, and zee who he'll come to."

The rosy baby stood between the two old men, resting its chubby hand on the Squoire's knee. The pipes were being puffed over his head, and George and Jemima stood close by, in broad-faced admiration.

"Come to me, baby," said Kezia, running in between, and kneeling down with open arms before this last bud of the family tree.

"What a row about that stupid baby!" cried Mark and Luke; "and father and mother's just as bad. Give us Lachlan's letter, George."

George gave the letter.

"You'll come to the school treat to-morrow, Mima," said Mark.

"Mr. Raven wishes every one to be present," said Kezia.

"Grandfather, do you know whether Madam Rambully will let Miss Aline come?"

"She says she may go if Miss Eagles will go with her."

"And Miss Eagles won't go," said Luke. "She's more distant than ever."

"They say such strange things of her," said Jemima. "I never liked her for my part."

"I am sure it is not true," said Kezia, indignantly.

"She walks miles to meet her lover," said Luke. "No wonder she wouldn't have Matthew."

"They say it is that grand gentleman that used to be visiting at the Lodge," said Luke.

"Or—" began Mima.

"A mummock maybe," growled farmer Bull. "Hold your tongues, boys. No one shall speak ill of Miss Eagles in my company."

"Thank you, grandfather," said Kezia.

"How's madam"—puff, puff! asked the Squoire.

"Rambully, or Fluke! flesh or fish?"

"Both"—puff.

"Madam Rambully's as bumptious as a sick sheep, Mrs. Fluke's as spry as a cappled cow. Fluke's a good sort of fish, Squoire!"

"Ho, ho!" puff.

"Don't be putting such nonsense into father-law's head, granfather," whispered Mima. "We don't want any Fluke here. We've trout enough in our stream."

"But we can't catch 'em, Mima," said George.

"She's a queer fish, anyhow," said farmer Bull.

"Keep a secret?" puff, puff.

"Close as an oyster. Die rather than open out. Roast her alive, or force her open, she wouldn't tell."

"Sensible woman"—puff; "only one in the world—ho! ho!"

"When are you coming to propose?"

The Squoire nodded his head, but did not reply to this direct question. He had not made up his mind.

And in this state of indecision we will leave him for the present.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LORD OF THE MANOR.

The annual Yeo school-feast took place in the large field that formed part of the glebe land belonging to the Vicarage. The hay had just been carried, and the field was ready for every sort of amusement. As all the parishioners subscribed to give the feast, so the greater part of them were present, some because they liked to see the children enjoy themselves, some out of compliment to Mr. Raven, and others because they had nothing better to do.

Miss Eagles consented to take Aline, consequently Aline helped the Raven children to help the schoolchildren, and entered into her work with all her heart, while Miss Eagles stood at a distance, quite alone, watching them, or seeming to watch.

In the midst of the feast, a general diversion

was made by the appearance of five gentlemen. These were the three Mr. Bats, Sir John Nux, and Mr. Horsefall, his architect.

We cannot wonder at the start of surprise made by almost all the assembly in the field at so charming an apparition.

The schoolchildren started and curtseyed, till they nearly overset their tea-cups; the Vicar started off to welcome the comers; his sister and the other ladies started into their most fashionable manners; Miss Eagles, alone, started and turned very pale, and Aline started to run direct to Mr. Oliver Bat, but checked herself, and went on helping the children.

"They came down yesterday evening," said Mr. Bat, senior, "and I brought them all off here to-day."

"We thought you were abroad, Cousin Oliver," said Miss Daw.

"So I was, until I fell in with Nux, and he brought me home," replied Mr. Oliver.

"And he is going off again with me next week," said Sir John, taking off his hat to Miss Daw's large bonnet.

"How you are altered, Sir John," said Miss Margery. "So grown! I should not have known you."

"I was a boy when I left, and now I am three-

and-twenty, Miss Daw. How d'ye do, Captain Love? I'm very glad to see you again."

"Welcome home, Sir John," said the Captain. "Allow me to introduce my daughter. You remember her?"

"Of course I do. We used to play together."

Sir John held out his hand, Margaret Anne blushed and looked pleased, and Mrs. Love at once elevated her into "My Lady."

"I hope you are not going away again, Sir John," she said, as that gentleman shook hands with her; "we can't afford to lose you at Yeo. The house is nearly finished and quite beautiful, as every one says, don't they, Aunt Ann and Aunt Margaret? The true Italian style, or Elizabethan, or Corinthian, which is it? The tower is lovely, and as to the saloon and drawing-room, all the rooms in short, they are quite exquisite. As Margaret Anne says, the florid style of architecture quite. Not the florid? Well, I don't understand, but I am sure it does Mr. Horsefall infinite credit. You must be quite a foreigner now: Italy, Switzerland, Persia, all the world over. Oh, not Persia! And where are you going next?"

"Mr. Oliver Bat and I are going to Greece together, I believe, and then we mean to return and settle down in Yeo. I am just going to speak to Miss Raven; I will come back directly,"

Sir John went away, and Mr. Oliver Bat took his place.

"Miss Daw tells me that there is no gossip in Yeo now," he said. "What has happened here, Mrs. Love, to effect such a change?"

"I see you're not improved, Mr. Oliver, by your foreign travels, and I don't think you've any right to go wandering about the world and picking up all sorts of fancies. I never knew we were gossips, and indeed there's nothing to gossip about that I know of, except that Ellen Eagles over there. I wonder she ventures to show her nose in public, don't you, Aunt Margaret? And to bring that child with her that nobody knows anything about! I declare I scarcely like letting Margaret Anne come into such company."

"Oh! then Miss Eagles hasn't given up the—What was it?" asked Mr. Oliver, quietly.

"I should think not," said Margaret Anne, with a toss of her head. "They say she continues—"

"My dear, you should know nothing about such things!" said Miss Margaret Daw.

"Certainly not!" said Miss Ann.

"A bold, impudent young woman," said Miss Margaret.

"Very," said Miss Ann.

"Perhaps it is not true," said Miss Harriet.

"True—" began Mrs. Love, but Mr. Oliver also wanted to speak to Miss Raven, and bowed himself off, leaving the ladies to speculate on the possibility of his marrying that "tall, thin woman, after all."

By this time the children were engaged in various games, and Miss Raven, aided by Aline and her nieces, were playing with them, as were Kezia Lyons, and others of the party. Miss Eagles still stood apart, alone, watching, or appearing to watch, the children.

Aline went to her from time to time, as did the Ravens; but her little bit of mystery had been magnified by rumour and gossip into such a big bit of mystery, that her friends and acquaintances seemed to avoid her by tacit consent.

Sir John Nux ent about the field, making himself agreeable. He talked some time to Mr. Lyons, whose family were, as he well knew, the descendants of the old proprietors of his present domain. Mr. Lyons looked, as he really was, a gentleman, and had put on his best manners with his best coat. He introduced his children, George and Jemima inclusive, and a goodly show they made.

"Only eleven, Sir John," he said, "and the grandchild makes the twelfth."

Then Sir John went with Mr. Raven to be

introduced to his sister and children. In shaking hands with the eldest girl, now twelve years of age, he saw Aline.

"Surely this is not your sister?" he said, holding out his hand to Aline, who frankly held out hers in return.

"Oh, no; it is Miss Rambully," was the reply.

"I live at the Downs Farm," said Aline, seeing Sir John look inquisitive.

"Oh! how are Mr. and Mrs. Bull? I must go and see them to-morrow."

"They are very well, thank you," said Aline, turning away from the Baronet, to speak to Mr. Oliver Bat, who came up to her.

"I am so glad you are come home, Mr. Oliver," said Aline, simply. "Will you not go and speak to Miss Eagles? I think she will be so glad to see you again."

"Yes, if you will come with me," replied Mr. Oliver.

The pair went together, closely watched by a great many eyes, and by none more narrowly than by those of Sir John Nux.

Sir John was a great admirer of beauty. What young man of three-and-twenty is not? or of three-and-sixty, for that much. He had admired Miss Love's curls, delicate complexion, and slight figure: he now admired Aline's beau-

tiful eyes, as she looked at him and told him so honestly that she lived at the Downs Farm; he thought, "what a sweet child," and wondered what she was doing at the Downs, and how she came there.

Sir John Nux was a good-looking, gentleman-like young man. He was short of stature, but well grown, and lithe and active, as young men should be. He had nothing remarkable in his appearance. He was not of that hero type, or that aristocratic bearing, that are supposed to make passers-by ask, "Who is that?" but he was well-mannered, well-dressed, well-to-do in position and fortune, and well pleased with himself and the world in general. He was neither remarkably clever nor remarkably stupid, and what he lacked in talent, he made up in observation. He had plenty of money and time at his own disposal, so while his new house was building, he had roamed about the world, admiring many things much, but more than all else the ladies. He had a mother who lived abroad and was entirely independent of him, but to whom he paid frequent visits. Her health being delicate she could not, or fancied she could not, reside in England, so she had purchased a villa at Nice, and lived there principally.

The chemical great great grandfather of the Nux's had acted more liberally by his descen-

dants, than had the more aristocratic ancestor of the Lyons's.

Mr. Oliver Bat and Aline duly reached Miss Eagles, while Sir John was watching them, and when he had turned away to make inquiries concerning Aline of Mrs. Love, and to receive such answers as that lady might be expected to give, Mr. Oliver and Ellen were casting at one another all kinds of missiles.

"How is your father, Miss Ellen?" said Mr. Oliver.

"Thank you—he is not well."

"I shall go and see him."

"He will be very glad."

"And you? are you not glad to see an old friend again?"

"A *friend*, yes—but I never see one—except perhaps Aline."

"Whose fault is that?"

"Not mine."

"Perhaps, then, the anonymous friend's?

"Perhaps, so.

"You will not—you have not given him up?"

"I have not, and I will not."

"Oh Ellen! you are sowing for yourself sorrow to reap—"

"A triumph."

"There is my daddy," broke in Aline, as she

saw farmer Bull enter the field, and hastening to meet him, she left Mr. Oliver and Ellen for a few moments alone.

"Ellen, why will you not tell me what you mean?" asked Mr. Oliver, anxiously.

"Are you not afraid to speak to me? look at those Daws and Loves yonder! they hear every word you say, and to morrow *you* will be the anonymous."

"I wish I were, I should then be satisfied."

"A *friend* would be satisfied with his *friend's* word."

"But you give me no word."

For a moment Ellen Eagles thought "I will tell him all and end this mystery." But she glanced round and saw many eyes fixed on her and, as it were, fingers pointed at her. She was instantly possessed with the demon of pride: she would have her triumph,—she would bide her time.

"You have been in Italy," she said, abruptly, "did you think of my brother?"

"I did, and I once fancied I saw him," and as he spoke, Mr. Oliver Bat sighed, gave Miss Eagles one reproachful look, and was his own dry cynical self again.

"But if it was he, and if he knew me, he avoided me, and left the picture gallery in which I was."

Another interruption.

"Oliver, I have been looking everywhere for you," said Mr. Nicholas Bat from behind.

"Oh! Miss Ellen, how are you? where is your father? he promised me to come. Oliver, we must go home to dinner. Miss Eagles, have you heard anything of that young boy in whom you were interested?"

Miss Eagles told him that they had heard from Lachlan.

He pulled his brother's coat, nudged his elbow, and winked at him mysteriously. Mr. Oliver understood.

"There is more money at his service, Miss Ellen, if he wants it," he said; "good bye."

They shook hands and parted.

With the five gentlemen, the light of the tea-drinking went out to many of the by-standers, but the children, with Aline and Kezia amongst them, still continued their merry games.

And Ellen Eagles still watched, or seemed to watch them, with two large tears in her eyes.

CHAPTER XXI.

ELLEN AND HER PUBLISHERS.

During the course of the following week Sir John Nux made frequent visits to the Downs Farm. He met Aline several times. Once he came upon her in the hay-field, where she was raking vigorously, whilst her mother was sitting under a tree at a little distance. He stopped to talk to her daddy, and to look at her. Another time he fell in with her at early morning on the Downs, when she, her pony, and her dog, were racing over the dewy sward. As he was on horseback, he rode with her, and she, nothing loth, found herself at last at full gallop with the young squire. When she told her mother and Fluke of the adventure, the former laughed, the latter scolded, but both said she should not make acquaintance with young men without an introduction.

Again, Sir John stumbled upon Aline when she was coming down a ladder from a hay-loft, whither she had been in search of new-laid eggs for her mamma. She had several in her pinafore when she saw him coming, and in her haste to descend before he reached her, she stumbled and fell. What could he do but help her up out of the very dirty place in which he found her, and condole with her as with a child upon her broken eggs and muddy frock? She laughed so heartily, and blushed so charmingly, that Sir John thought, as did Mr. Oliver Bat, that he had never seen so sweet a child. Had he not made up his mind to be in Greece at a certain period, it is possible that he might have stayed longer at the Downs to look after Aline, but he told her he should be back again in a twelvemonth, when he supposed that his new house would be finished; and she told him that all the farmers hoped he would come home for good.

Once more he saw her sitting reading to her mother under the elms, by the little chapel, near the sluggish brook. She nodded to him as he passed, but he stopped and turned back, and, after hesitating a while, spoke to her and her mother.

Madam Rambully was rather pleased to be addressed in a tone of voice to which she had long been a stranger, and entered into conversa-

tion with him, keeping down the blue veil the while. No one of his calibre had ventured to address her before since she had been at the farm. The Mr. Bats had nodded to Aline, and passed on when she was with her mother, but the younger and bolder man made her acquaintance. They talked of many things, but mostly of Italy, until Madam Rambully, suddenly remembering her desire of secrecy, rose, and bowing to Sir John, walked away.

Aline had tutored Max to guide her mother, and it was a pretty sight to see the blind lady cross the little foot-bridge over the stream, with Max pulling her by a string in front, and Aline holding her dress behind. No wonder that Sir John stood to watch them, or that he continued to do so as Madam Rambully put her arm round Aline's neck, and walked on. She was taller than her daughter, and of very graceful figure, and as her blue veil fell upon Aline's white sun-bonnet, Sir John thought of the clouds about the moon, and became momentarily poetic.

But the little excitement caused by his and Mr. Oliver Bat's return to the country, was soon to be over, as they left it again in the prescribed week. Mr. Oliver had been to see Mr. Eagles, but as Miss Eagles was out at the time he did

not see her again. He left, however, with her father a present of some foreign books and pictures,—nominally for him, really, as Ellen rightly judged, intended for her.

She grew paler and paler, sterner and sterner, relaxing only for her father and Aline.

But in the course of a few weeks, she looked brighter and more hopeful. A letter came from Lachlan to his uncle, which, though short and hurried, I will transcribe, as I have done its predecessors.

"Great George Street, Westminster,
"August 17th, 18—.

"My dear Uncle,

"At last I hope I have made one step in life. Before I left Newcastle I received a letter from Mr. Markman, telling me that Mr. Raven had kindly given him my address and character, and that he wished me to go at once to him in London. This was not so easy, as the journey was long and expensive; but, fortunately, I had just got some money by my lectures, and Stern had gained a trifle by his work, so we set out. Stern would not leave me, and, indeed, I could not have parted with him, so he, Yeo, and I, got to London as best we could. Sometimes we walked, sometimes we got into a waggon, sometimes into a returned chaise,

and at last we finished our journey grandly, by coach and train.

"We were weary enough when we reached London, where neither of us had ever been before. As to Yeo, he was half dead, and I had to carry him occasionally, for we did not let the grass grow under our feet you may be sure. We found out Great George Street somehow, and presented ourselves, in navvy garb, late at night, at Mr. Markman's office. He was not there. He was gone to his house in the country. Nobody was there but a porter. We felt very forlorn. The man mis-doubted us, and would only tell us to call again the next morning if we wanted to see Mr. Markman.

"We walked up the street, and then stood still to look about us. A carriage drove up, just before the door near which I was standing. Two ladies and a gentleman came out of the house, and got into it. One of them was a beautiful young girl in white, so like Cousin Kern that it was as if her spirit were before me. The light of a lamp fell upon us both. She looked at me, and I could have sworn it was she. She got into the carriage, however, and I saw no more of her.

"A policeman politely told us to 'move on.' I asked him where we could 'move' to get a night's decent lodging, and he pointed the way to

a public-house. We had money enough left to pay for a supper and a bed, and with some difficulty we got them.

"The next morning we went to Mr. Markman's office again. We waited some time in the hall, and at last he came. I remembered him well, and my heart beat faster than it ever beat before when I saw him. He did not know me, and hurried into his office. We waited on. At last I asked a clerk to tell him that Lachlan Lyons was come, according to his summons: and I gave the clerk his letter. Mr. Markman sent for me at once.

"Stern and Yeo followed me. It looked ridiculous, I know, but I couldn't tell them to stay behind.

"'Still in navvy dress?' said Mr. Markman. 'Who have you with you?'

"I told him; and then Stern said that he had only come to put me safe into his honour's hands, and to hear what was to become of me, and then he would go and look for work somewhere near.

"Mr. Markman smiled kindly, and told him to sit down, and wait a while. He then said that he wanted an active steady fellow in his office, to do whatever work he chose to give him, and that if I did not mind drudgery of head and hand, I

might have the post, and learn engineering in return.

"I need not tell you how I jumped at the offer, or how thankful I felt for it. Tell Mark that now I am in London I will try to find something for him. It will be my fault now if I am not, some day, a civil engineer.

"Stern began to cry when he heard of my good luck. Poor fellow! he is not very strong yet. And then Yeo began to howl—you know he always howls when he sees any one cry.

"Mr. Markman rang his bell, and ordered luncheon in another room, for three. This was for Stern, Yeo, and me. We did credit to it, I assure you, and blessed the donor.

"He then told Stern that there was work for him on a new line, and that he could, if he liked, get a lodging within reach of me, but that I must live in Great George Street.

"And so it was settled.

"I am now 'in office.' I am to have a bedroom above, and the use of a small sitting-room, when I have time to leave work. Mr. Markman has advanced me some money to improve my dress a little, and has sent Stern to his work. I arrived in London last night, and already feel at home in this great house. It shall go hard with me if I do not prove my gratitude to Mr. Markman, Mr.

Raven, and all my friends, by 'deeds, not words.'

"With love to all,

"Your dutiful nephew,

"LACHLAN LYONS."

When the next letter was sent to Kern, she was informed that her cousin was her near neighbour, and Aline pictured to herself the pleasure that Kern would have in again seeing Lachlan. All the members of the various families at the different farms rejoiced in Lachlan's improving fortunes, and augured great things for him; Mrs. Lyons, alone, lamented that he should be putting foolish notions into Mark's head. She said her boy was "civil" enough already, and Lachlan too, and she didn't see that they wanted to go to London to be made "civiller."

Some weeks after the receipt of Lachlan's letter, Miss Eagles was seen walking to Yeominster with a large brown paper parcel under her arm, well sealed, and tightly tied. Various conjectures were hazarded upon this subject, but when, after careful inquiry, it was found that she had herself booked the said parcel at the Yeominster coach office, nobody doubted that it was sent to the anonymous correspondent.

Weekly, for many months, did Miss Eagles

trudge her five miles to Yeominster, anxious for an acknowledgment of her parcel. At last it came in a long letter from Lachlan, directed as was agreed between him and Miss Eagles. I should say that he had previously sent her a newspaper to assure her of its safe arrival. We will venture to read his letter, though no one but Miss Eagles may ever read it besides.

We must accompany Miss Eagles in her breathless walk home—her agitated meeting with her father—her hurried tea—and finally, her retirement to her own room.

There she opened the letter, with trembling fingers and quick throbbing pulses. It was as follows:—

"Great George Street,
"March 8th, 18—.

"Dear Miss Eagles,

"At last I may relieve your suspense, and say that the business is done. Your book is actually accepted, and will be printed in the spring, if you agree to the terms. Mr. Markman says they are very fair; but I must tell you my adventures in search of a publisher before I come to the terms, or Mr. Markman's opinion.

"As soon as the MS. arrived, and at my first leisure moments, I went to Messrs. Critic and Schoolem, one of the first publishing firms in

Paternoster Row. I saw a gentleman of very bland manners and smooth coat, and told my errand. He did not detain me long. He said at once that their firm published very few books of the sort, and those only by the established authors of the day. I felt inclined to ask what sort he meant—but as I saw nothing further was to be made of him I held my tongue.

"I then went to another firm in that same celebrated 'Row.' The gentleman I saw was very civil, and I liked his manner better than the other; he was not quite so smooth.

"I showed him the MS. He said at once that a book with such a name would never take. It was a sentimental and fashionable age, and everything depended on a title. 'Ann Ellis!' who would ever buy a book with a heroine so called? Moreover a West End publisher would be more likely to entertain a novel. They would read the MS., but they scarcely thought it likely it would suit them.

"I asked when I could have the MS. if I left it for perusal. 'In about a month or so,' was the reply.

"I left it accordingly.

"The month passed, and I went again to the 'Row,' and saw my friend. He had forgotten me apparently, and when I inquired about the

book, he seemed to have forgotten that as well. However, I recalled it to his mind. No—he was very sorry, but it had not been read. A press of business had prevented attention having been given to it. He would send it to a literary friend, and let me have an answer in a week or so. And, in effect, the answer came together with the MS.

"The work had merit, said the note, but it was too abrupt in style, and the characters were of too natural and commonplace a kind to insure it success. It was accordingly declined with thanks. So much for Messrs. Scribe and Co.

"I next went to the West End. I asked Mr. Markman the names of the best publishers of works of fiction, and he told me one or two, but I did not then name my reasons for asking.

"My first West End attempt was on Mr. Coldman. He made a great many inquiries concerning the author of the book. Was it a first work, &c., &c. I said you had written for a periodical, and when I told him what periodical, he took the MS. at once under consideration, and promised me an answer in a fortnight.

"This time the reply came according to promise.

"The opinion was, Mr. Coldman said, not altogether unfavourable, but in the present state of literature and of the public taste, plain

descriptions of everyday life, mixed up with broad cutting satire, did not succeed. He thought that if the author would write a book with more fashionable names, and lay the scene in another grade of society, and make the language somewhat less terse, he (you see they take you for a man), might make a successful work.

"I tried one or two more fashionable publishers, as they are called, with similar results, and then I was almost going to give up the hunt in despair. But I resolved to consult Mr. Markman, which I did, without mentioning name or sex.

"He, too, asked me if my friend had ever published anything. And when I told him, he sent me at once to the publishers of the 'Metropolitan Magazine,' for which you write, to whom, strange to say, I had never applied.

"I no sooner told Mr. Beauclerc that the work I brought with me was by the author of the essays by E. E., than he said it should have immediate attention. I left the MS., feeling more hopeful than I had felt before.

"Yesterday, I received a letter from Mr. Beauclerc, which I will copy for you:

"'DEAR SIR,

"'We shall be happy to publish "Ann Ellis," upon half profits. We run a great risk,

for the book, though one of decided originality and talent, is not suited to the taste of the times; still, if our terms meet the author's views, we will go to print at once.' &c., &c.

"Mr. Markman says, that you would not make better terms than these anywhere for a first book, though what they call 'half profits' are no profits at all. The publisher pays all expenses first, and then he and the author divide the profits; but somehow or other there are never any.

"He said this sarcastically, and, as he has himself written books, I suppose he found that his profits did not come in; but assuredly yours will.

"Let me know your decision immediately.

"If you could trust me to correct the proofs, it would save the expense and difficulty of sending them to you. I think I know your style. I have not time for much personal matter. I am very happy, and Mr. Markman is very kind. I am so hard at work that I have only been twice to Dr. Dove's. Oh! I must give you a characteristic anecdote of Cousin Kern.

"The day that I went to buy some respectable clothes, after my arrival in London, I met her. I did not then know she was in town, and I had on my navvy dress.

"Kern was walking with her aunt, and attended by her constant beau, Mr. Robert Love, and some other gentleman.

"I felt sure it was my cousin, and, forgetting my appearance, was going to speak to her—but she looked at me, and passed on. She declares that she did not see me, but I am sure she did.

"However, she is tolerably polite now I have a coat, albeit not of fashionable make, or very fine substance; but wishes I would have my hair cut, and my collars differently made.

"She certainly is the most beautiful girl in London. And Dr. Dove told me, that he did not like to take her out, people stared at her so. But she behaves admirably, and seems to keep all her admirers at as great a distance in London as she did the boys at Yeo. She plays with Bullying Bob as a cat would with a mouse. That splendid ensign cut me dead, of course. But he has managed to make the old baronet story known to some one about these offices, for the clerks have got hold of the joke. But I take no notice of it.

"Dr. and Mrs. Dove were very kind in inviting me to their house whenever I could go thither; but after office hours I read and study as much as I can.

"Stern has work on a new line near London,

and is very happy, I am glad to say. He comes to see me frequently. Yeo has a good birth, and so has his master, thank God for it!

"And now I must conclude, with best wishes for 'Ann Ellis,' and its author.

"Yours, dear Miss Eagles,

"Very truly,

"LACHLAN LYONS."

An author will readily understand Miss Eagles' feelings on the receipt of this letter; and by those who are not authors, I should scarcely make them understood. Suffice it to say, that when she had read it, she burst into tears, and that the tears did her a great deal more good than all the proud self-restraint that she had been putting on herself for months.

END OF VOL. I.

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